



STORY BY YUTO YOTSUBA
ART BY RYO OGAWA

ya + boy

Konosu + mino!

13

STORY BY **YUTO YOTSUBA**

ART BY **RYO OGAWA**



Kabetaijin

A three-time consecutive winner of the MC DRB battle. When Kongming helped him overcome his past trauma, Kabetaijin was able to return to the stage.



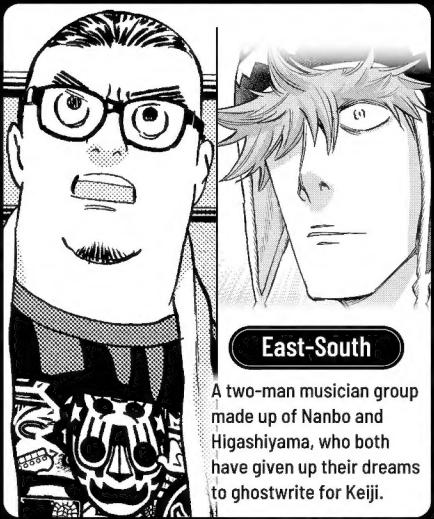
Shino Sakurai

A talented office clerk who manages The Fourth Kingdom's information database. Determined to be an indispensable force, she was hired as an official employee.



Hajime Shoji

An employee of The Fourth Kingdom. Aspires to break the borders of the music industry with Kongming.



East-South

A two-man musician group made up of Nanbo and Higashiyama, who both have given up their dreams to ghostwrite for Keiji.



Keiji Maezono

A genius solo artist who's said to be the best of our time. However, he's been using his influence as the scion of a major advertising company, Denposha, and the truth remains masked in lies and conspiracy.

THE STORY SO FAR

The massive music festival, *Summer Sonia*, is underway! To thwart Keiji's guard's desperate attempts to hinder Eiko's performance, Kongming exercised *the Pincer Attack Strategy*, and the number of Eiko's audience members quickly shot up to **5000!** Meanwhile, Kongming had recruited AZALEA's help in order to *revive East-South!* Even Kabetaijin's betrayal was all part of Kongming's *Strategy of Self-Sacrifice*. During the rap battle against Keiji, Kabetaijin revealed the truth behind Keiji Maezono's *ghost writers*, pushing the desperate man to a corner and forcing his hand to *threaten East-South* with a 100 million yen cancellation fee for their contract. But *Nanbo's wife* and *Higashiyama's sister* stepped in to support their family, giving East-South the push they needed to walk on AZALEA's stage. The *flames of rebellion* that Kongming had been fanning are finally roaring loud and fierce, with the help of the southeast wind!!



Zhuge Liang (Courtesy name Kongming)

The tactician of Shu. In 234 CE, Kongming passed away during the Battle of Wuzhang Plains, after which he was transported to Shibuya, 1800 years in the future. There, he meets the aspiring singer, Eiko Tsukimi, and appoints himself as her personal tactician.



Kobayashi

The owner of BB Lounge, where Eiko works. Quite the Three Kingdoms fanatic, he is currently Kongming's employer.

Eiko Tsukimi

Just as she was about to give up her dream of becoming a professional singer, Eiko meets Kongming on a fateful Halloween night in Shibuya. With his help, her talent in music is steadily blooming.

CHAPTER 99

Strategic Triple Strike

CHAPTER 100

The Look of Miracles and Hope

CHAPTER 101

Live Bebop

CHAPTER 102

The One Who Shines on the Great Stage

CHAPTER 103

A Perfect Stage

CHAPTER 104

So Close Yet So Far

CHAPTER 105

DAY 1

CHAPTER 106

Maria's Stage

EXTRA

Special Short Story "Morning Contemplation"

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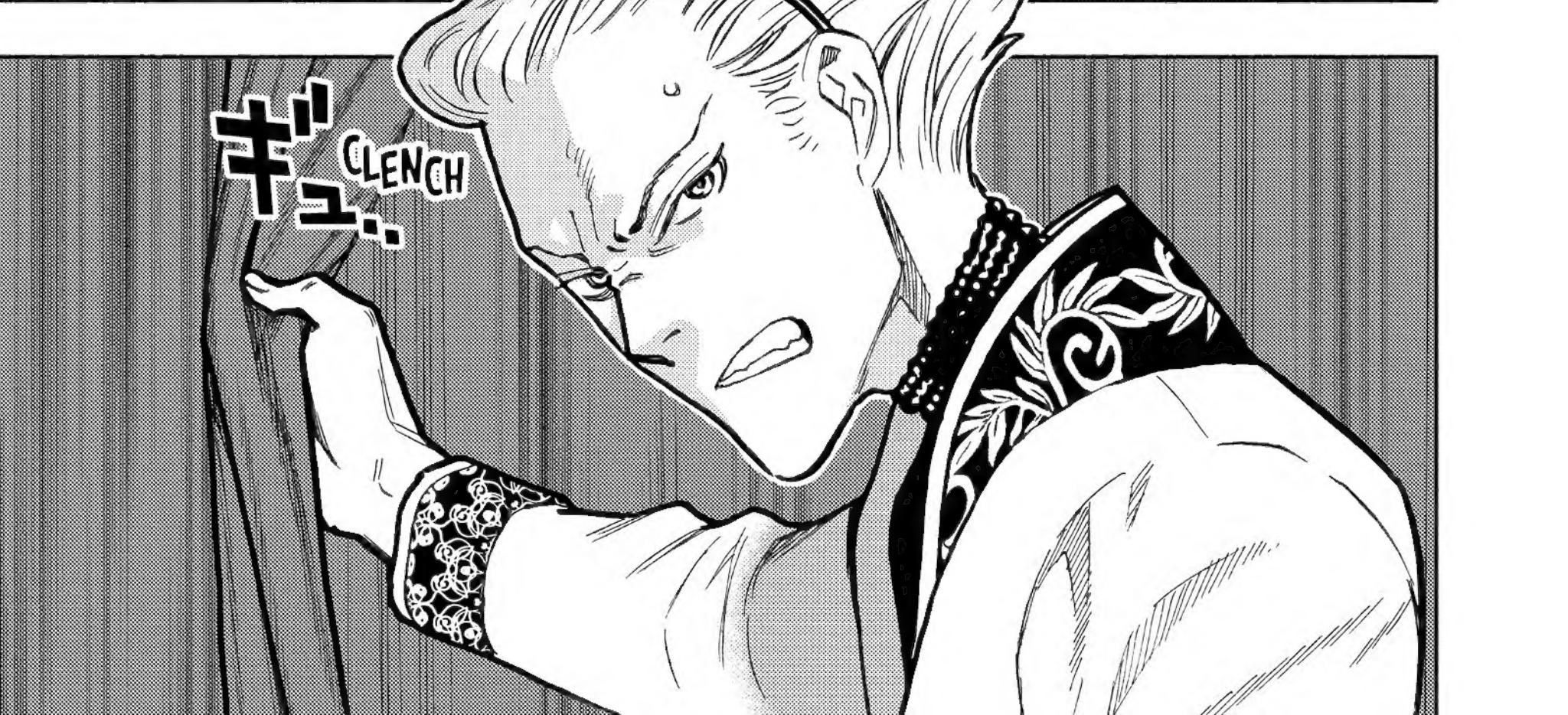
IT'S STILL
PLAYING.
SUMMER SONIA
IS SAYING
THAT THEY'RE
HANDLING THE
SITUATION ON
THEIR OWN
RIGHT NOW!

HAVE
YOU
CUT THE
FEED?!

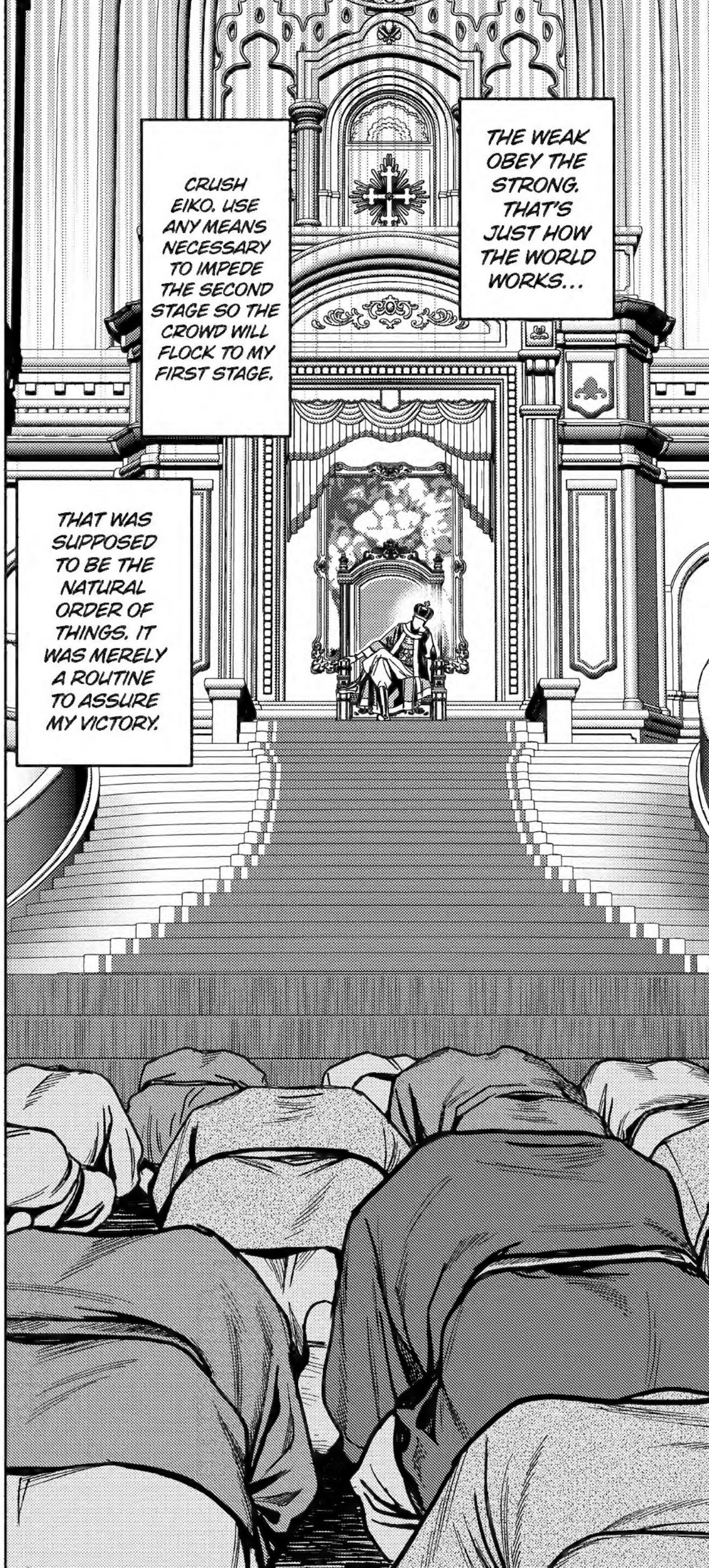
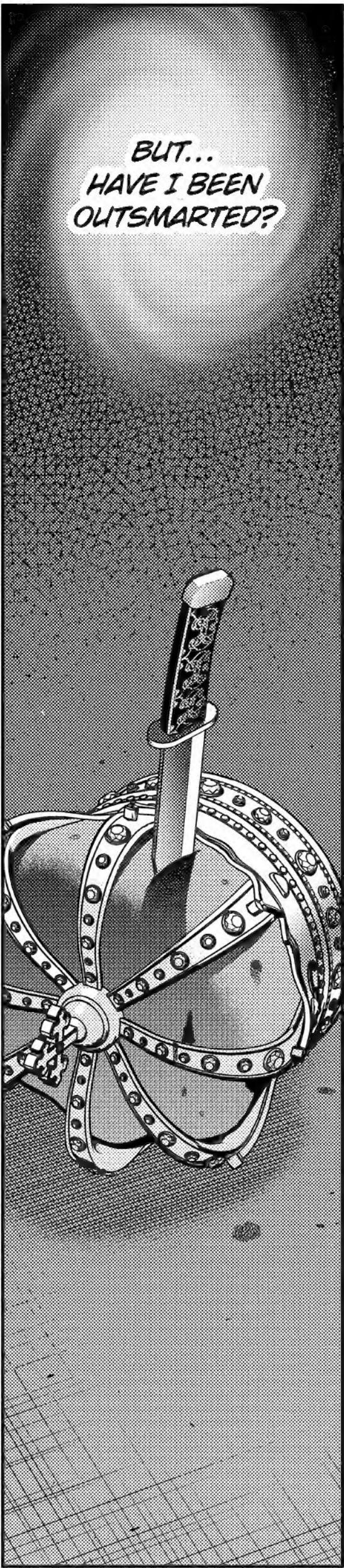
NOTHING'S
WORKING!
EVEN WHEN
WE TELL
THEM THAT
THE SHOW'S
GOING TO
RESTART!

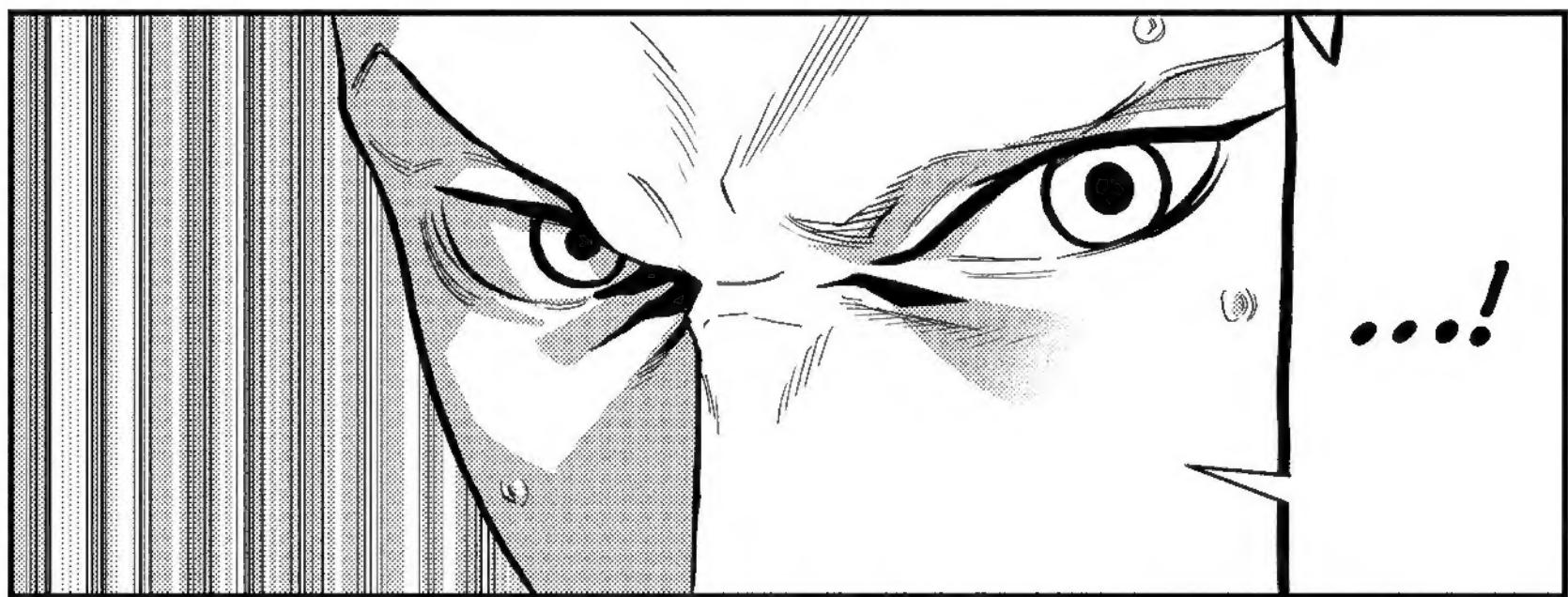
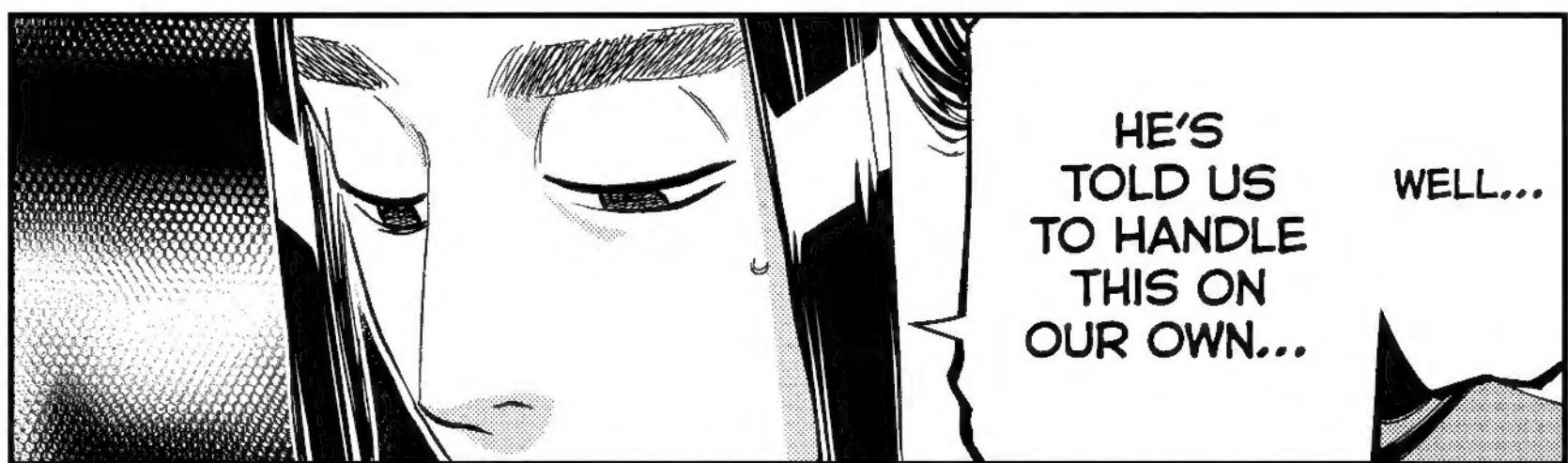
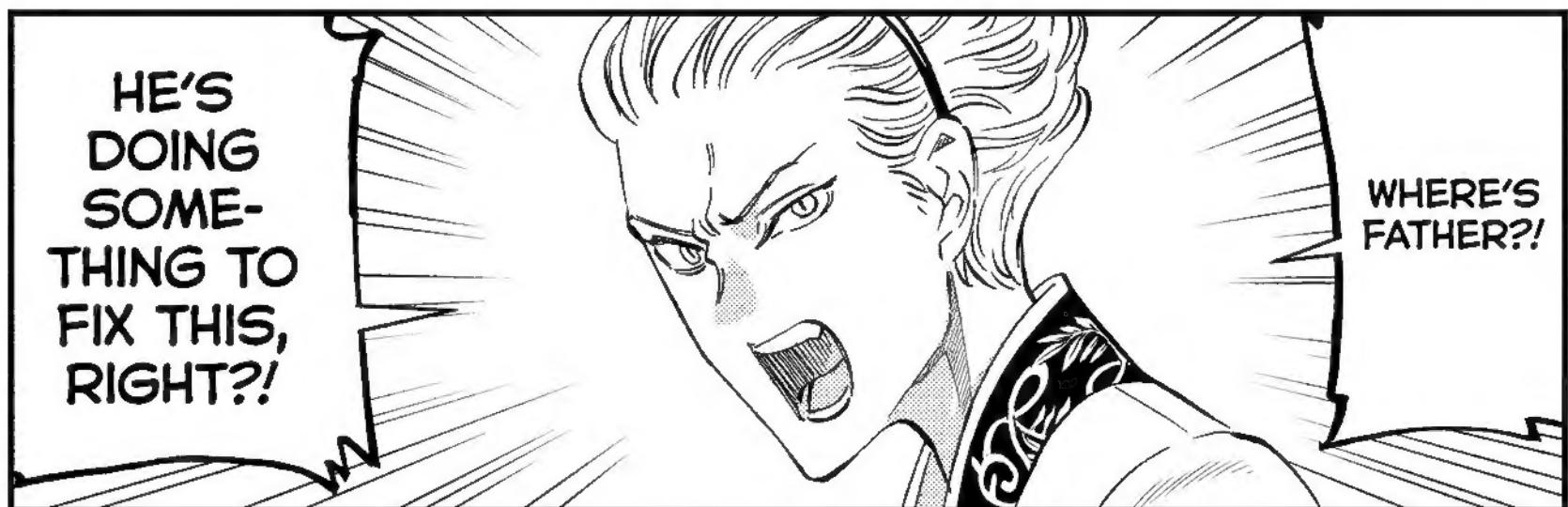
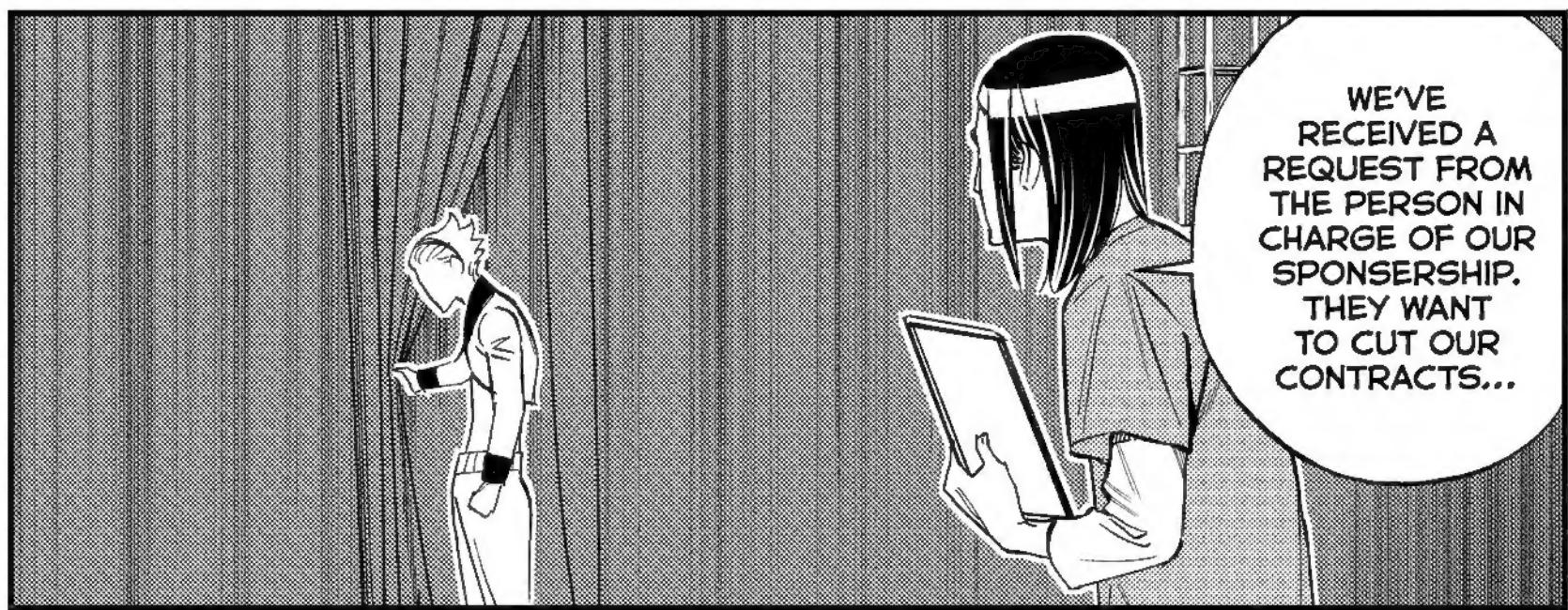
SHUT THE
AUDIENCE
UP!

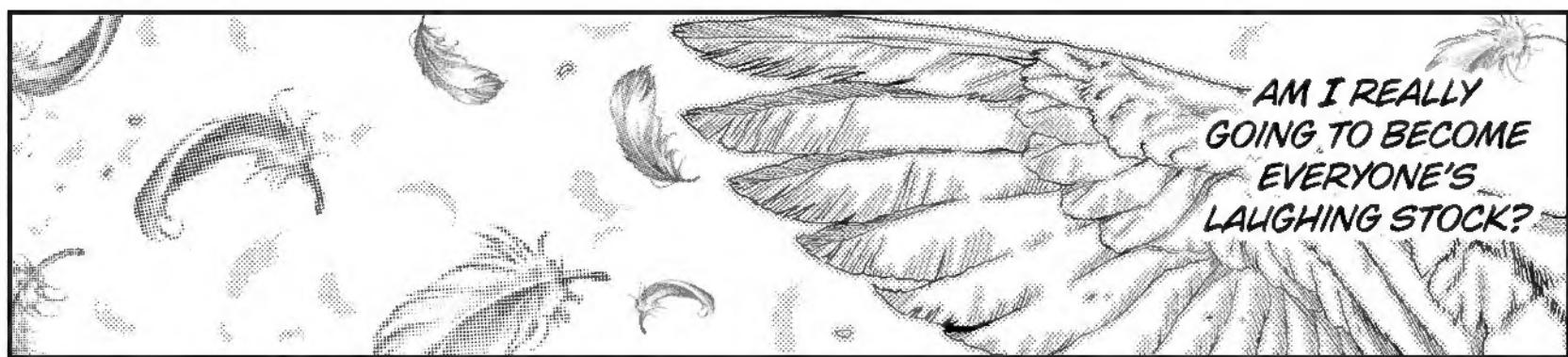
CHAPTER 99 Strategic Triple Strike

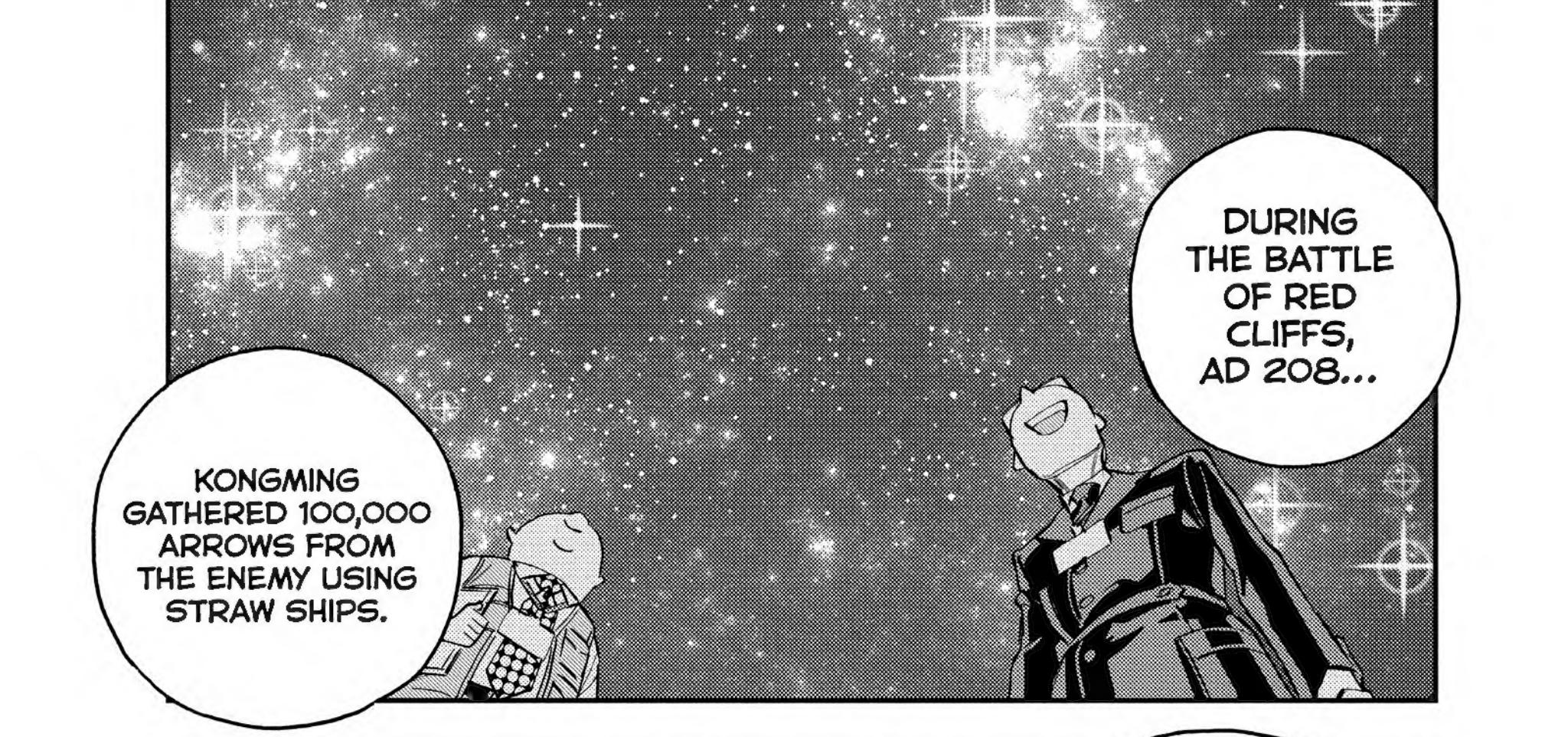


CLENCH



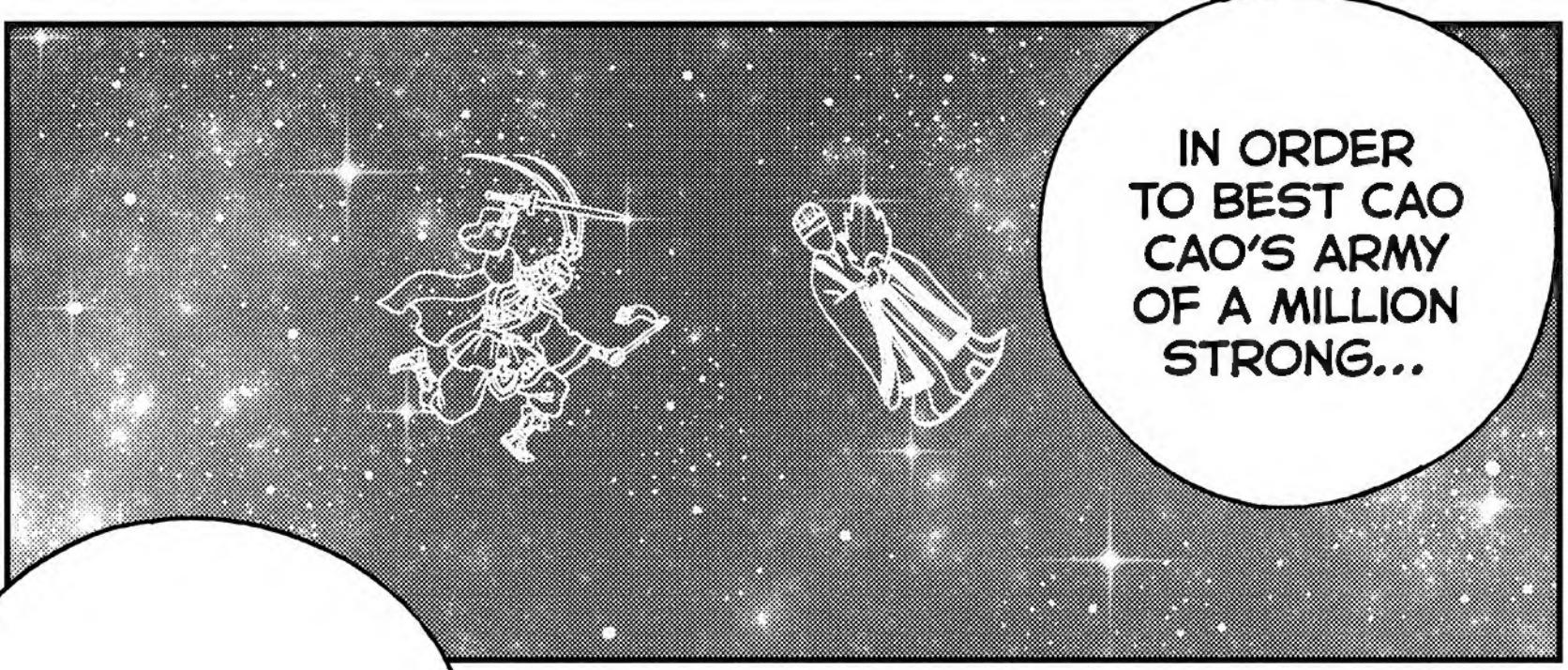






DURING
THE BATTLE
OF RED
CLIFFS,
AD 208...

KONGMING
GATHERED 100,000
ARROWS FROM
THE ENEMY USING
STRAW SHIPS.



IN ORDER
TO BEST CAO
CAO'S ARMY
OF A MILLION
STRONG...

HE SUGGESTED
THE FIRE STRATEGY
TO WU'S MILITARY
GENERAL, ZHOU YU.



...AND TOLD HIM,
"THE NORTHERN
SOLDIERS ARE NOT
ACCUSTOMED TO
FIGHTING ON WATER.
SEASICKNESS WILL
SURELY LOWER
THEIR MORALE."

...APPROACHED
CAO CAO...

AS PART
OF KONG-
MING'S PLAN,
HIS SWORN
FRIEND, PANG
TONG...

CAO CAO
AGREES WITH
PANG TONG'S
SUGGESTION,
ULTIMATELY
SECURING
HIS SHIPS
TOGETHER.

"TO PREVENT THIS,
YOU MUST LINK
YOUR BATTLESHIPS
WITH IRON CHAINS
TO MAKE THEM
MORE STABLE."

HUANG GAI OF
WU ENDURED
A TORTUOUS
BEATING TO
DECEIVE CAO
CAO INTO
BELIEVING
THAT HUANG
GAI HAD TRULY
DEFECTED.

IN ORDER
TO INFILTRATE
THE ENEMY
ARMY AND SET
FIRE TO THEIR
SHIPS...

AND THIS
WAS THE
"STRATEGY
OF SELF-
SACRIFICE."

WITH THE
SHIPS UNABLE
TO SEPARATE
FROM EACH
OTHER, THEY
COULD CATCH
ON FIRE MUCH
EASIER.

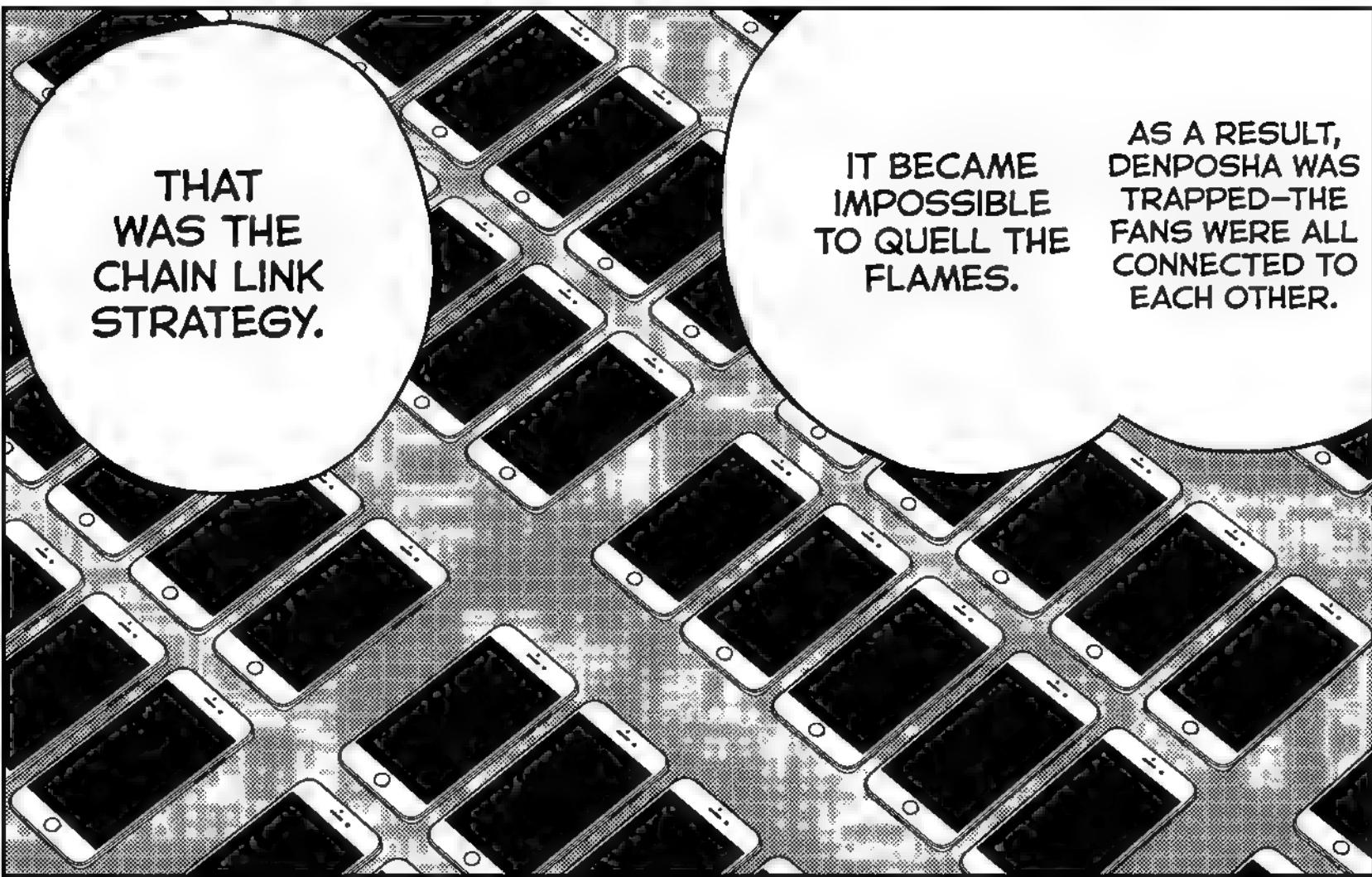
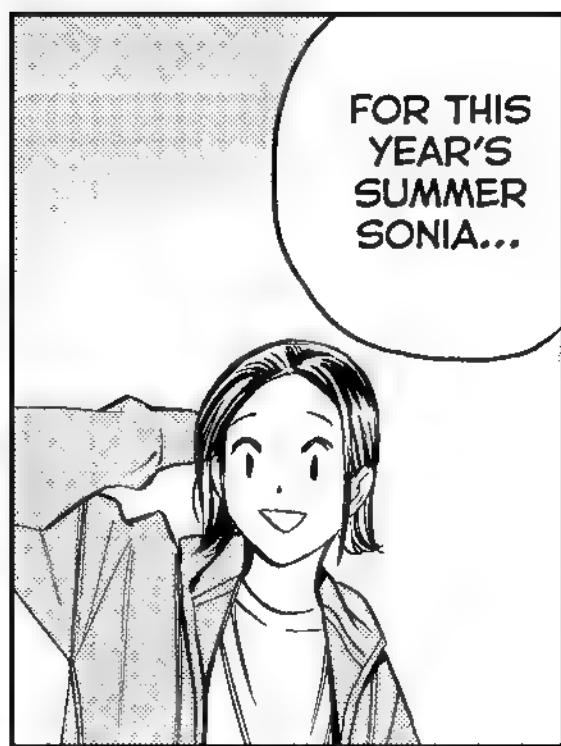
THIS
WAS THE
"CHAIN
LINKS
STRATEGY."

...THE HEAD-WIND MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE FLAMES TO RISE...

AND THEN, AS A FINAL STEP...

...AND SUCCESSFULLY SUMMONED THE SOUTHEAST WINDS.

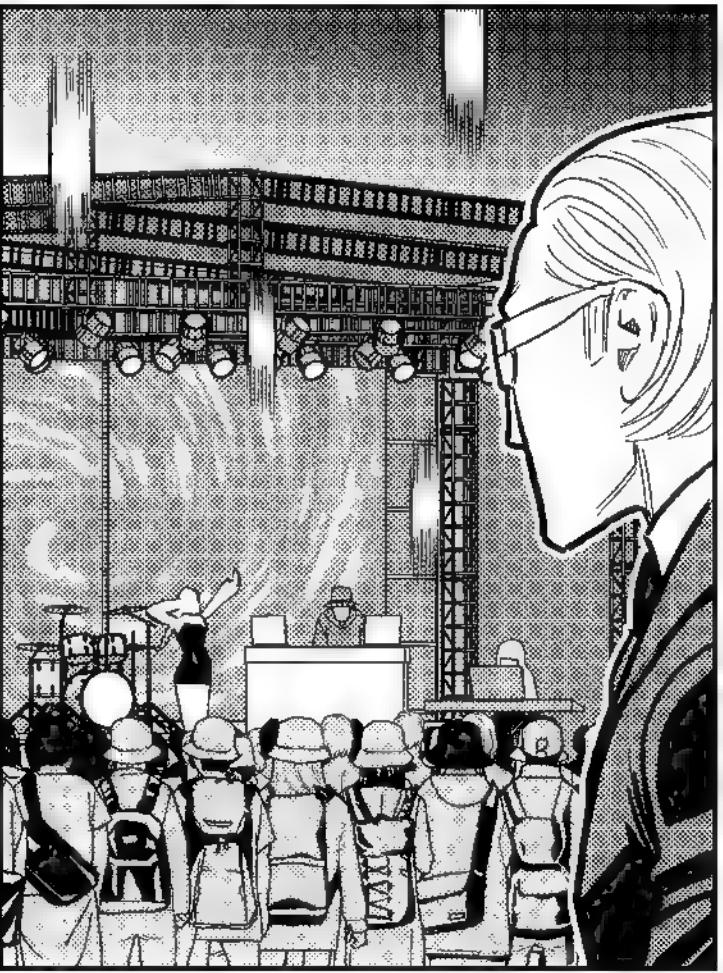
...BUT KONGMING, WHO UNDERSTOOD SEASONAL WEATHER, STEPPED UP ONTO A PRAYER ALTAR...



**...THUS
ALLOWING THE
SOUTHEAST
WINDS TO
BLOW.**

**FINALLY,
KONGMING WORKED
WITH AZALEA TO
HOST THEIR SECRET
CONCERT, REVIVING
EAST-SOUTH...**





HE MADE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE! HE HAS FANNED THE FIRE AND ENGULFED KEIJI MAEZONO IN FLAMES!

SHE
MIGHT
ACTUALLY
WIN THIS!

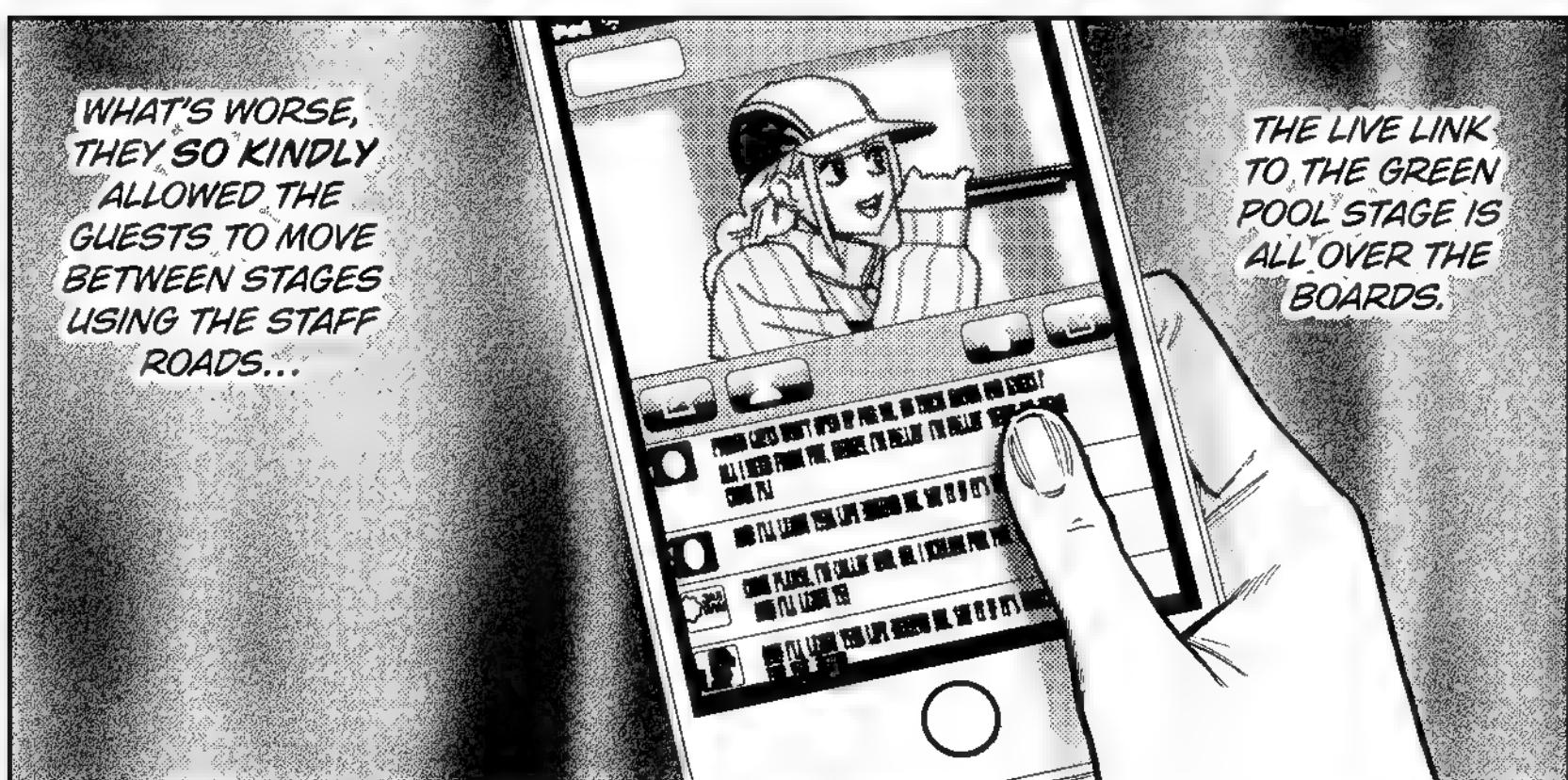
EIKO'S
DIFFERENT
TONIGHT.

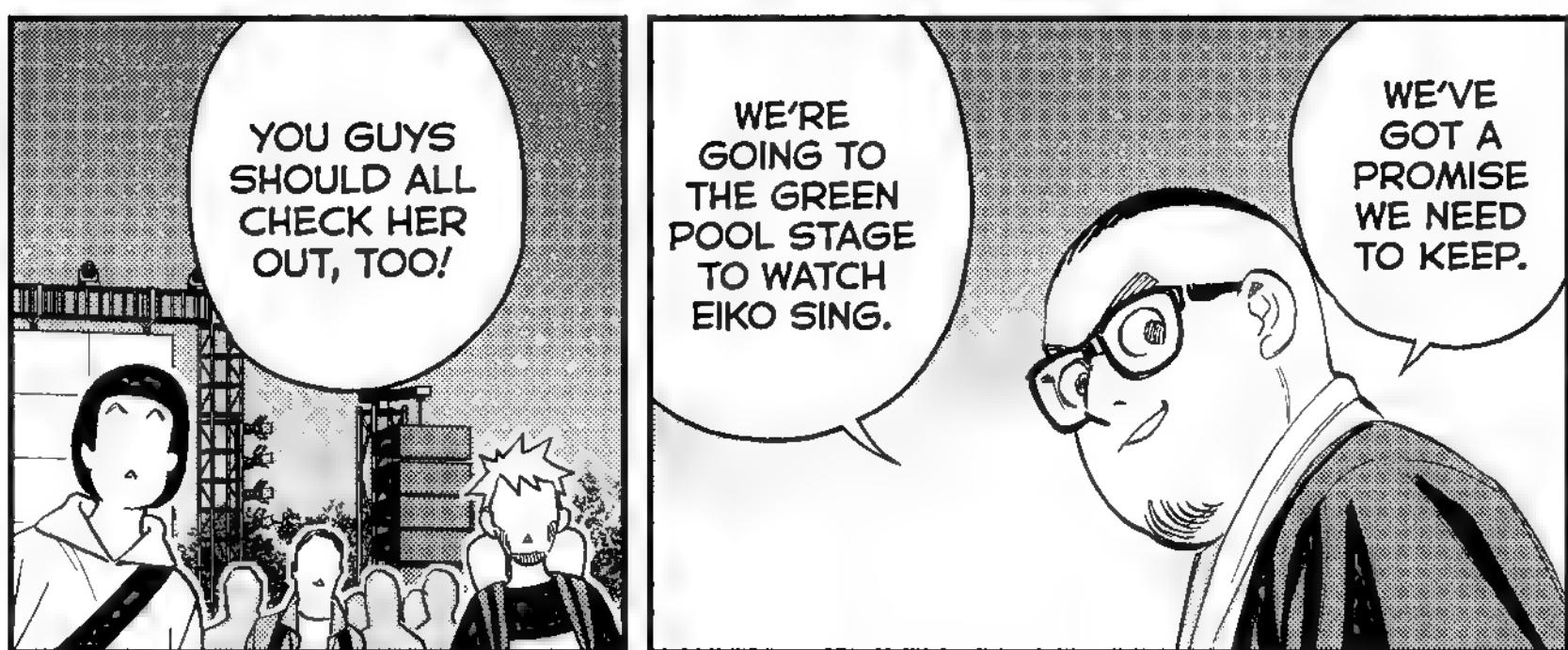
IT'S
TIME TO
STRIKE
WHILE
THE
IRON'S
HOT!

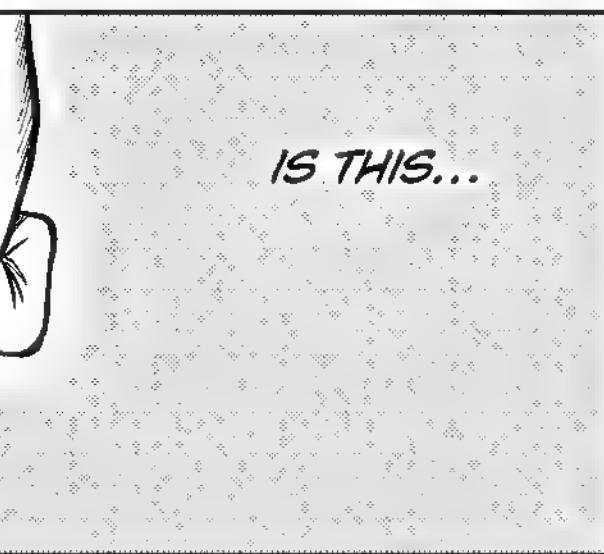
THE ENEMY
FORCES
ARE LEFT
TOTALLY
PANICKING.

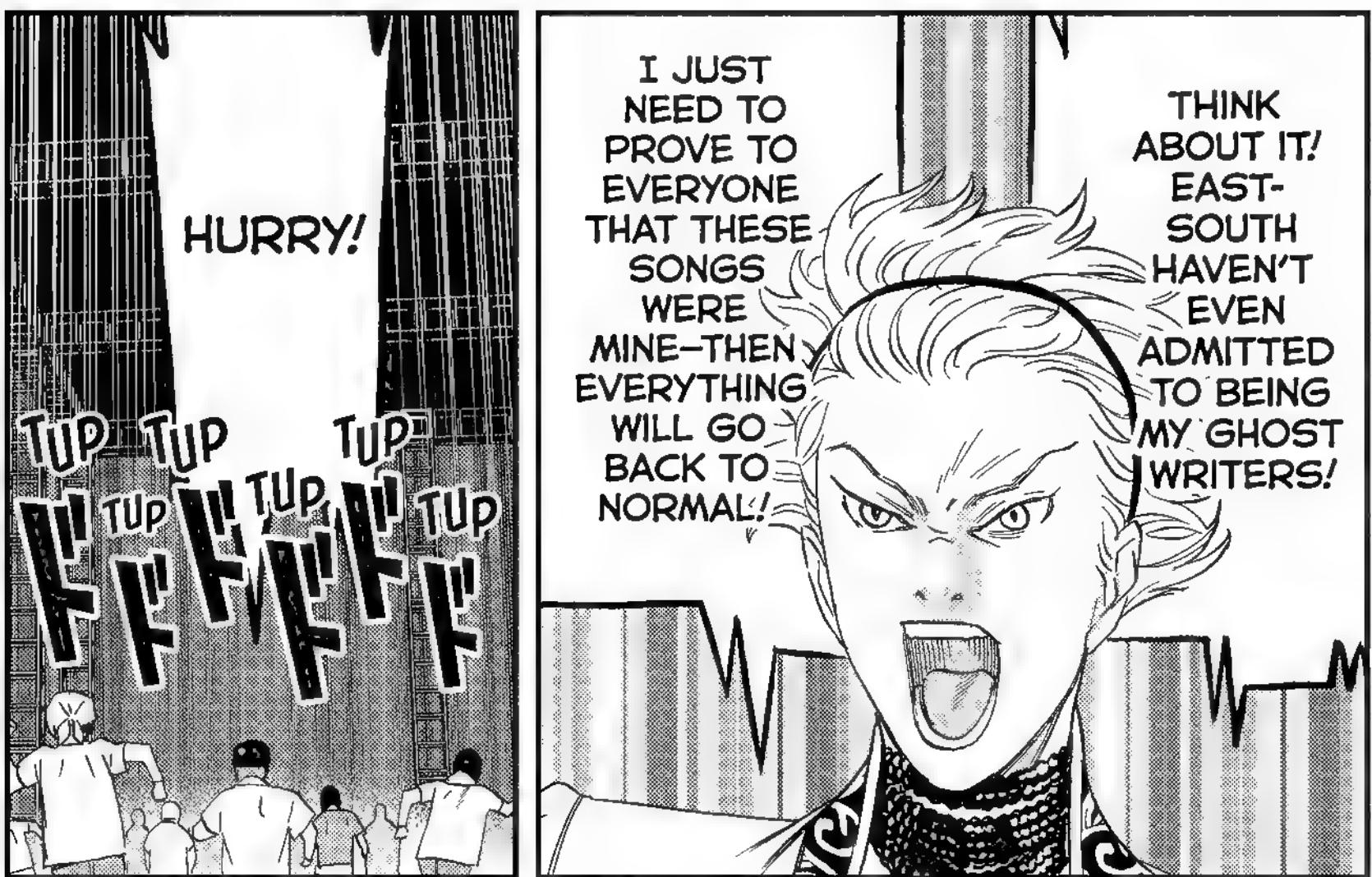
CRYSTAL STAGE
CURRENT GUESTS
39,980

44,505









AND THE
FANS ARE
STILL WAITING,
AFTER ALL...

Y-YOU'RE
RIGHT...

THE FANS
ARE WAITING?
ARE THEY
REALLY THAT
STUPID?

...AND MAKE
EVERYONE
WHO LEFT ME
REGRET IT!

I'LL SHOW
THE WORLD AN
OVERWHELMING
PERFORMANCE...

CRYSTAL STAGE
CURRENT GUESTS
27,655



FINALLY,
WE'VE DRAGGED
HIM OUT TO
THE REAL
BATTLEFIELD.



CHAPTER 99 END





**GREEN
POOL
STAGE**

THE SHORTCUT
TO THE GREEN
POOL STAGE
IS THIS WAY.

PLEASE
WALK
SLOWLY!

DON'T
RUN.

CHAPTER 100 The Look of Miracles and Hope

FROM NOW ON,
THE AUDIENCE
WILL COME AND
GO FROM EACH
STAGE BASED
ON THE MUSIC
ALONE.

THE FIRE
STRATEGY
BURNED AWAY
THE LIES AND
DRAGGED THE
REAL KEIJI
MAEZONO OUT
TO THE FIELD.



SIR KABE PUT
HIS LIFE ON
THE LINE TO
GIVE US THIS
CHANCE.

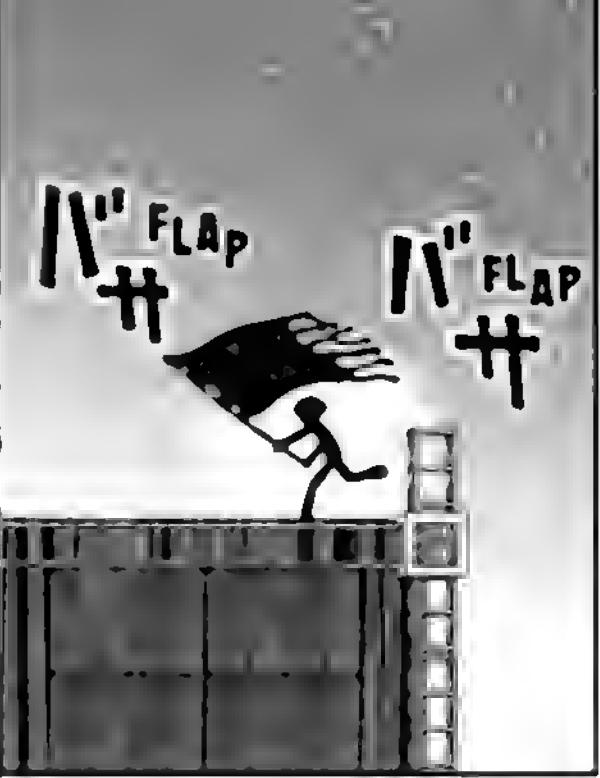
SIR KONDO HAS
LEFT SUMMER
SONIA'S FATE
IN OUR HANDS.

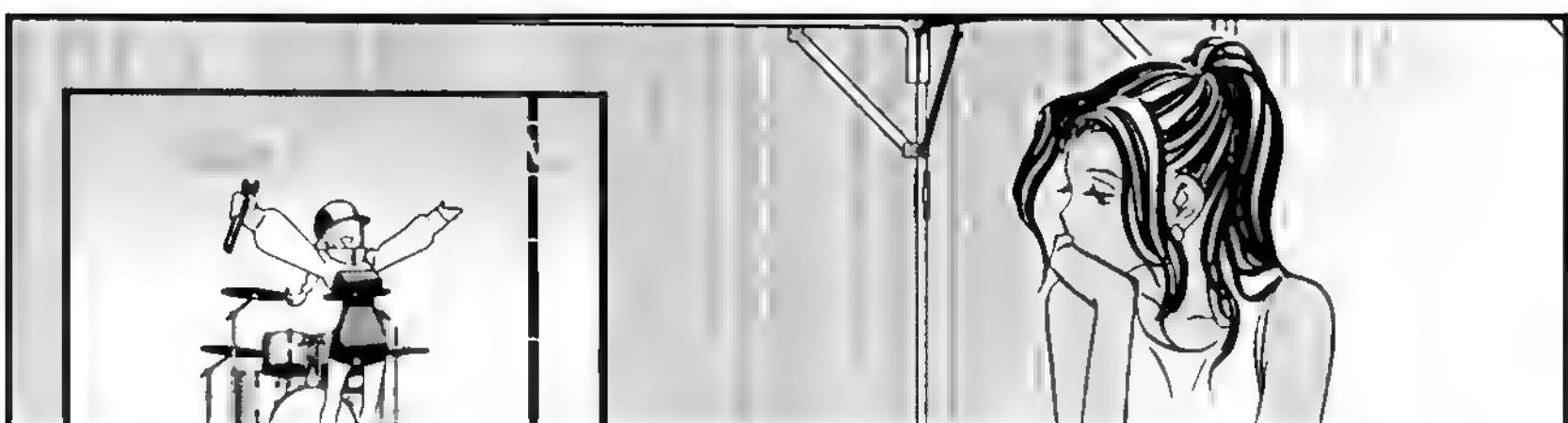
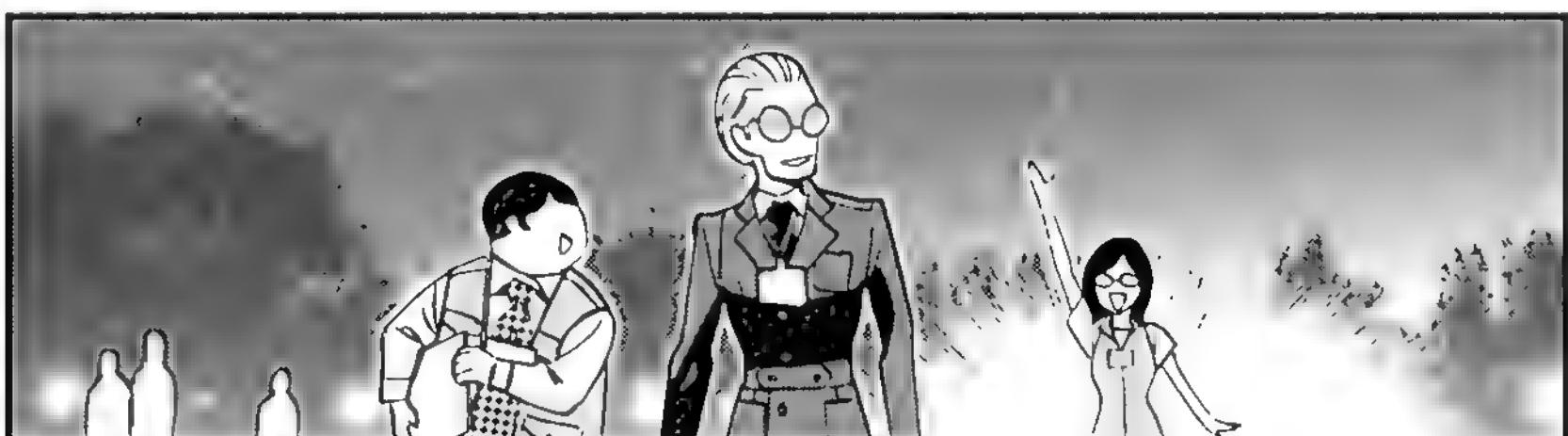
AZALEA USED
THE POWER
OF MUSIC TO
SUMMON THE
SOUTHEAST
WINDS.

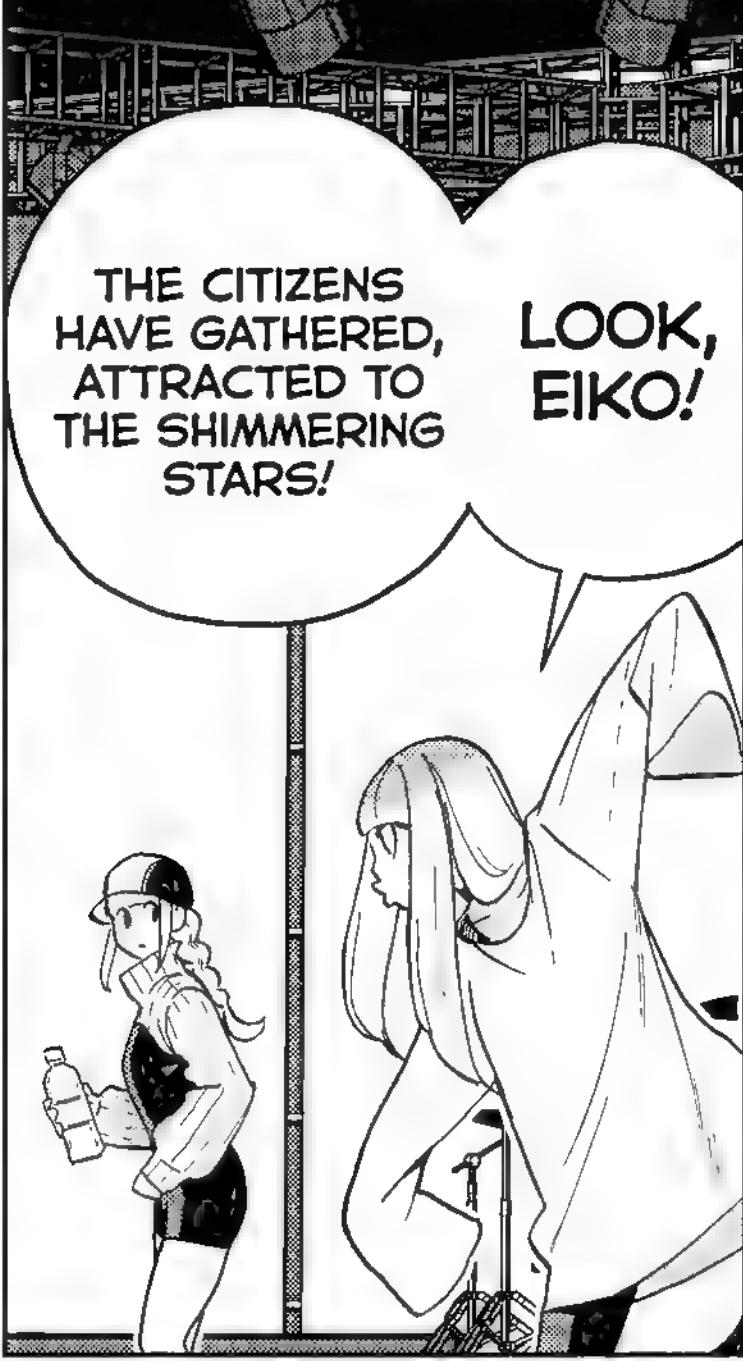


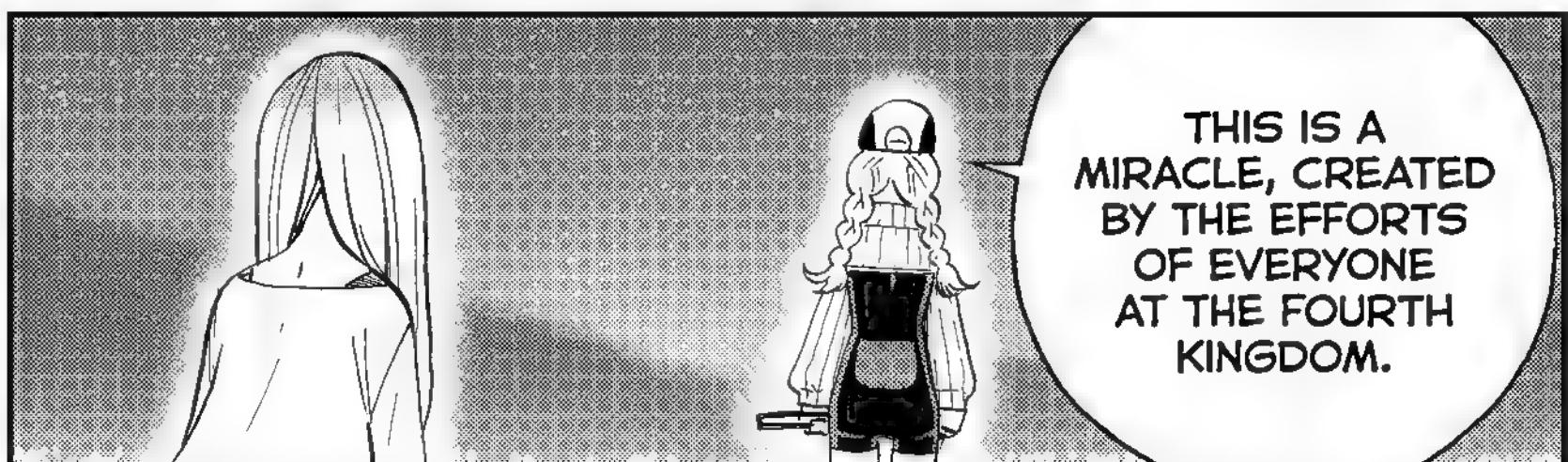
WE'VE
REACHED
THE FINAL
STAGE OF
TONIGHT'S
WAR.











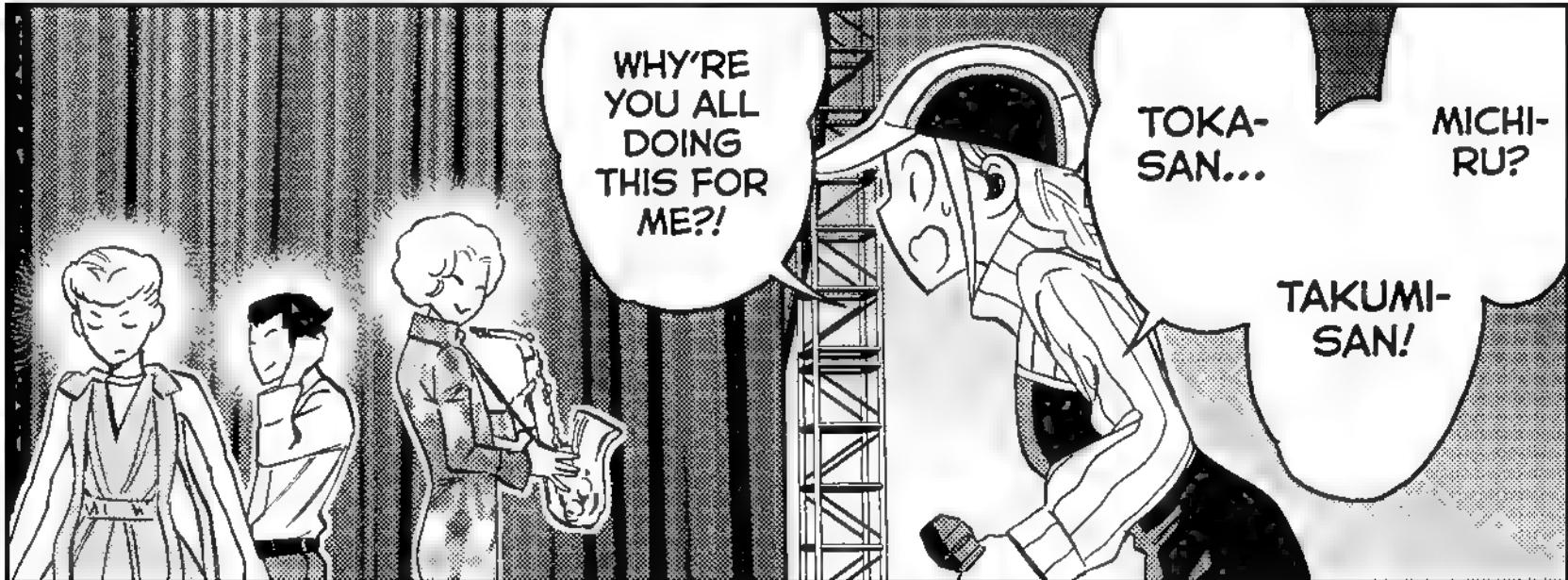


I'M
ALMOST
THERE...

I'M SO
CLOSE...

I BELIEVE I'LL BE
ABLE TO RESPOND TO
EVERYONE'S HOPES
ONCE I REALIZE
WHAT THAT IS.

YOU'VE
GROWN INTO
QUITE THE
SINGER!



WE'LL
FOLLOW YOUR
LEAD. NOW
HURRY IT UP.

IT LOOKED
LIKE YOU
NEEDED A
HAND, SO
HERE WE
ARE.

YOU
REALLY
DIDN'T
NEED
TO SAY
THAT!

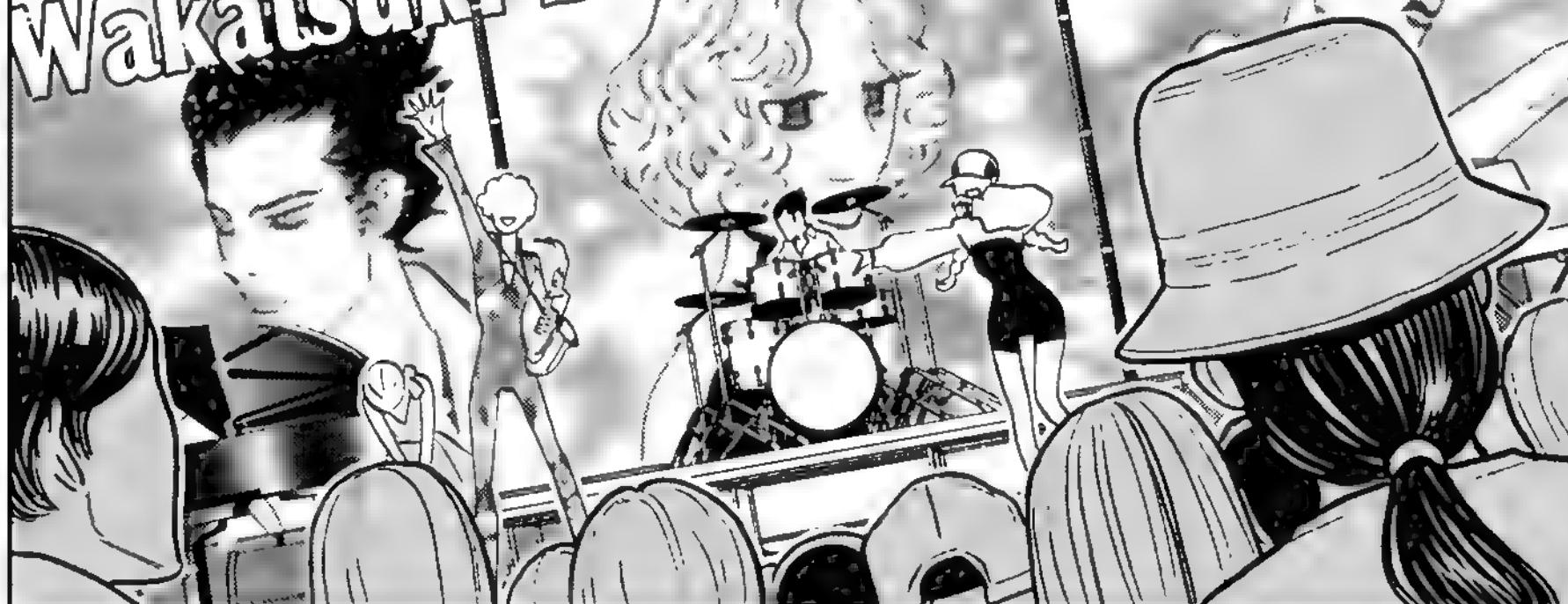
TOKA-CHAN
WAS SO
WORRIED
ABOUT YOU,
EIKO-CHIN!



Let's welcome the Wakatsuki siblings onto the stage as our special guests!

Hello everyone!

Wakatsuki Brothers and



FROM
THAT LONG
LINE OF JAZZ
MUSICIANS
...?

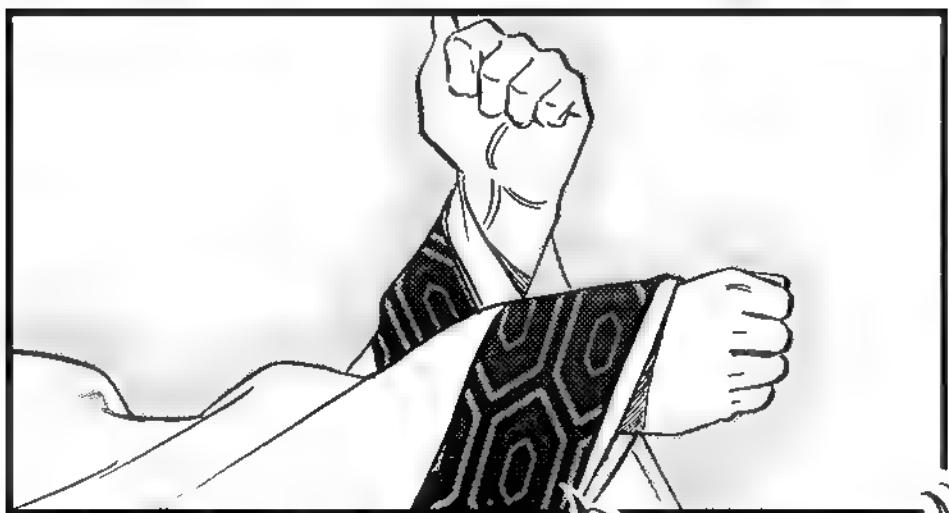
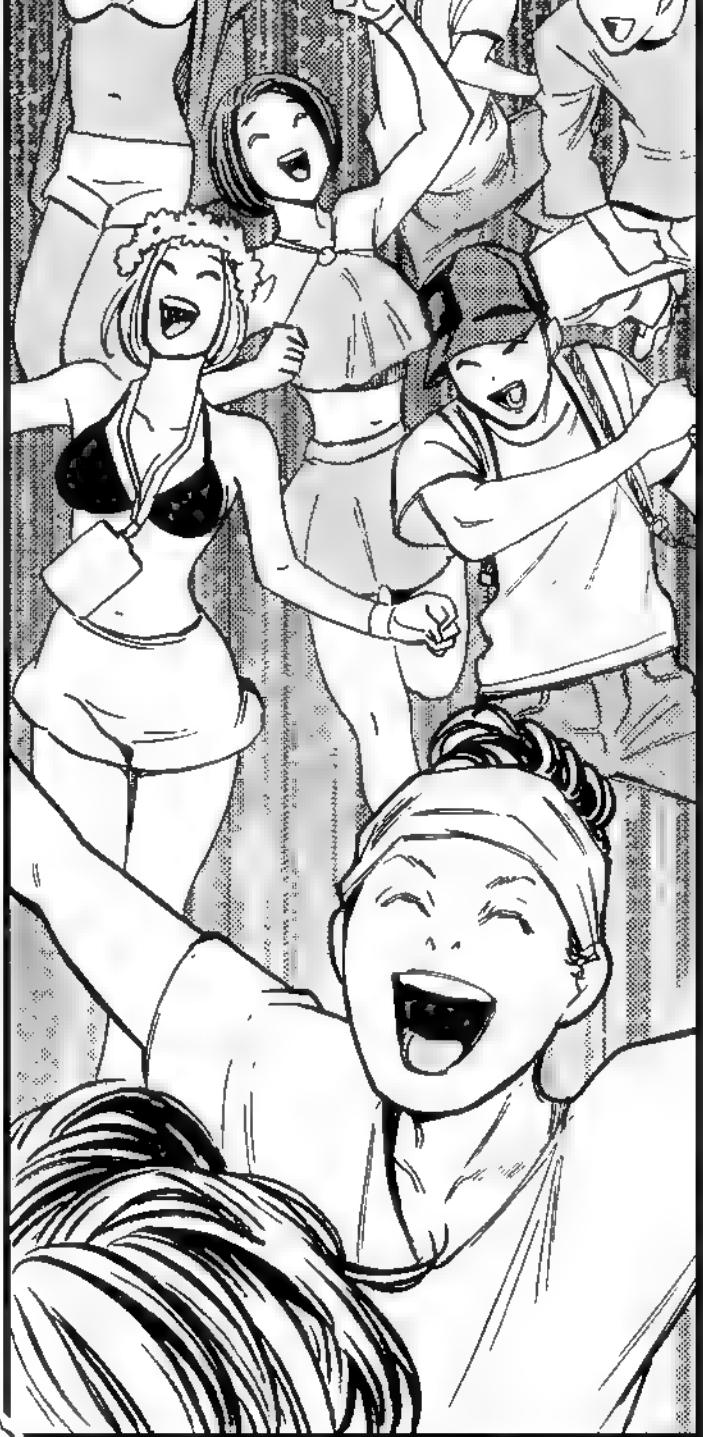
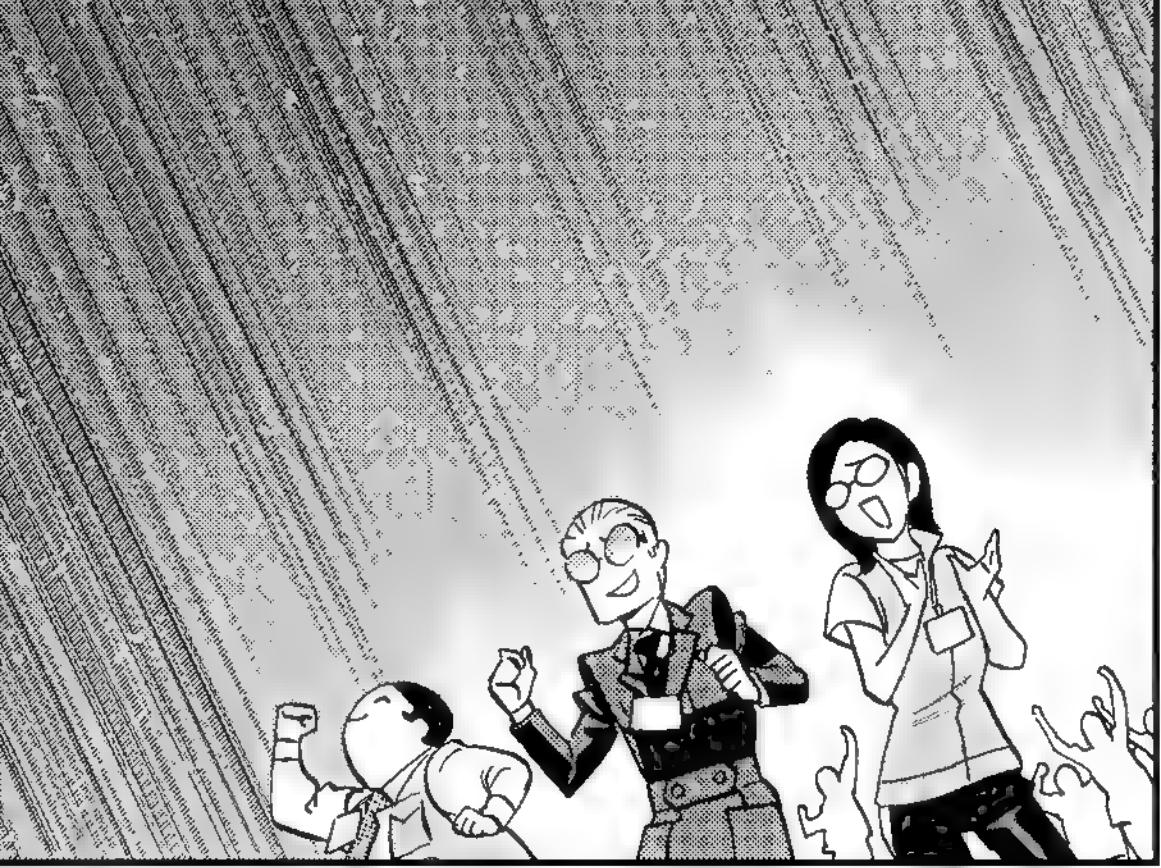
THE
WAKATSUKI
SIBLINGS...?

MAKE SOME
NOISE!

DON'T BE LATE!
COME ON,
THIRD STAGE!



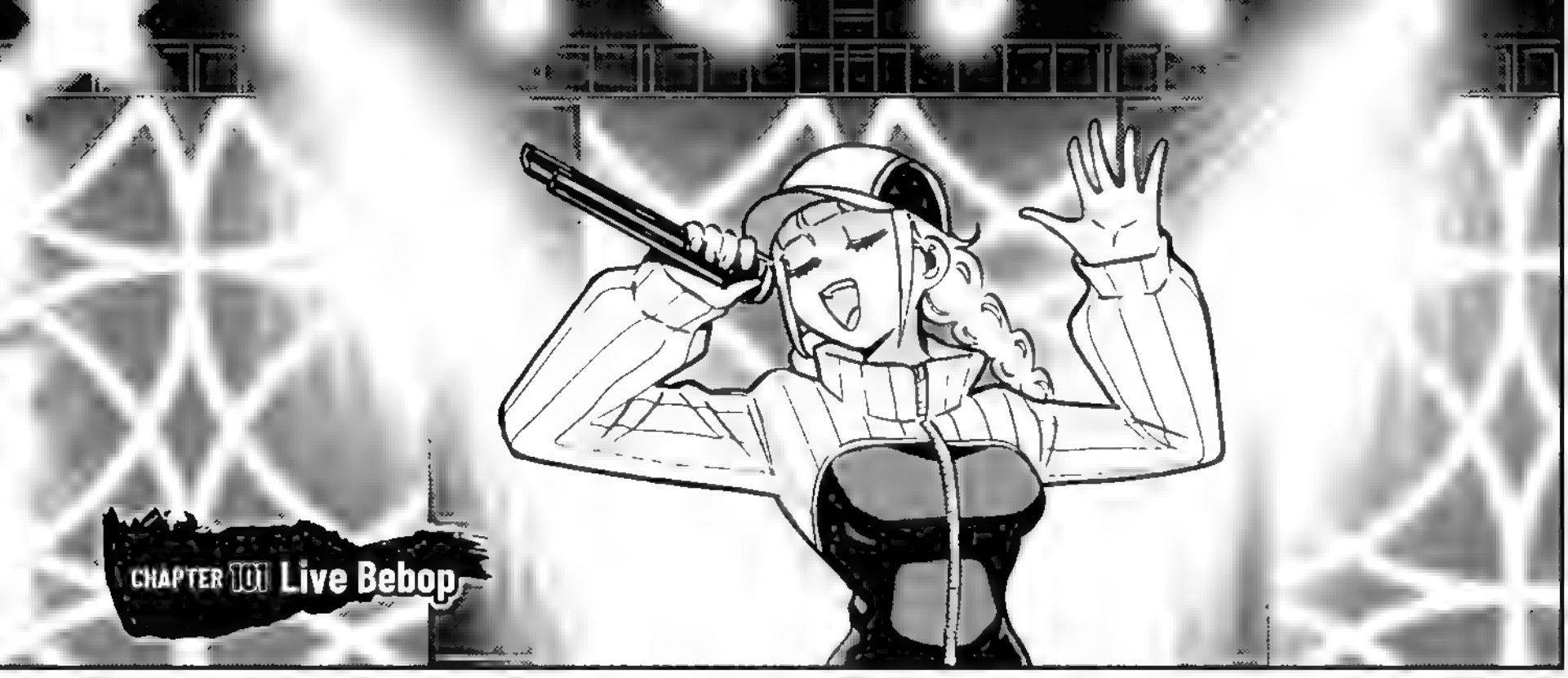




SWING



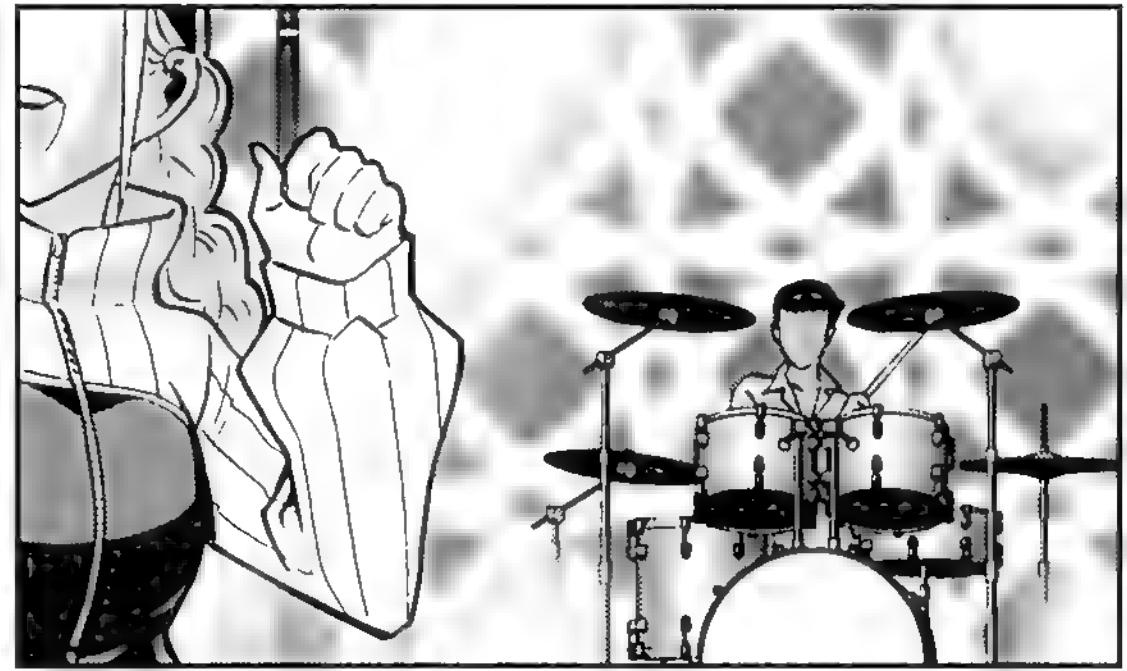


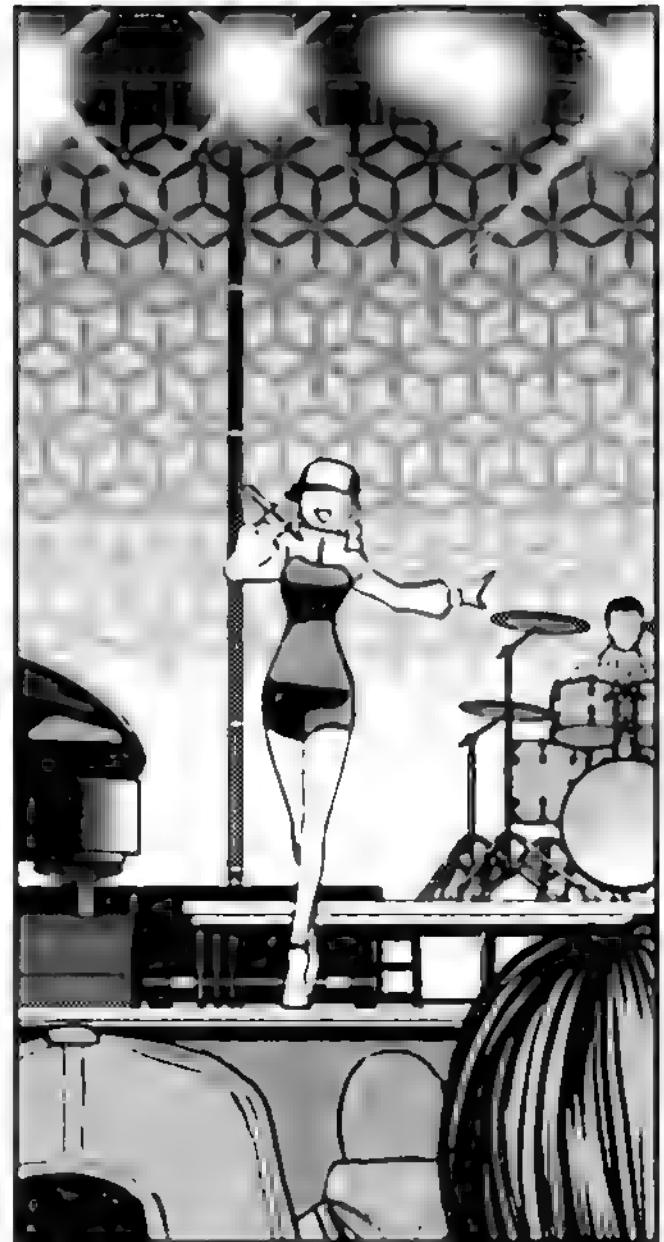
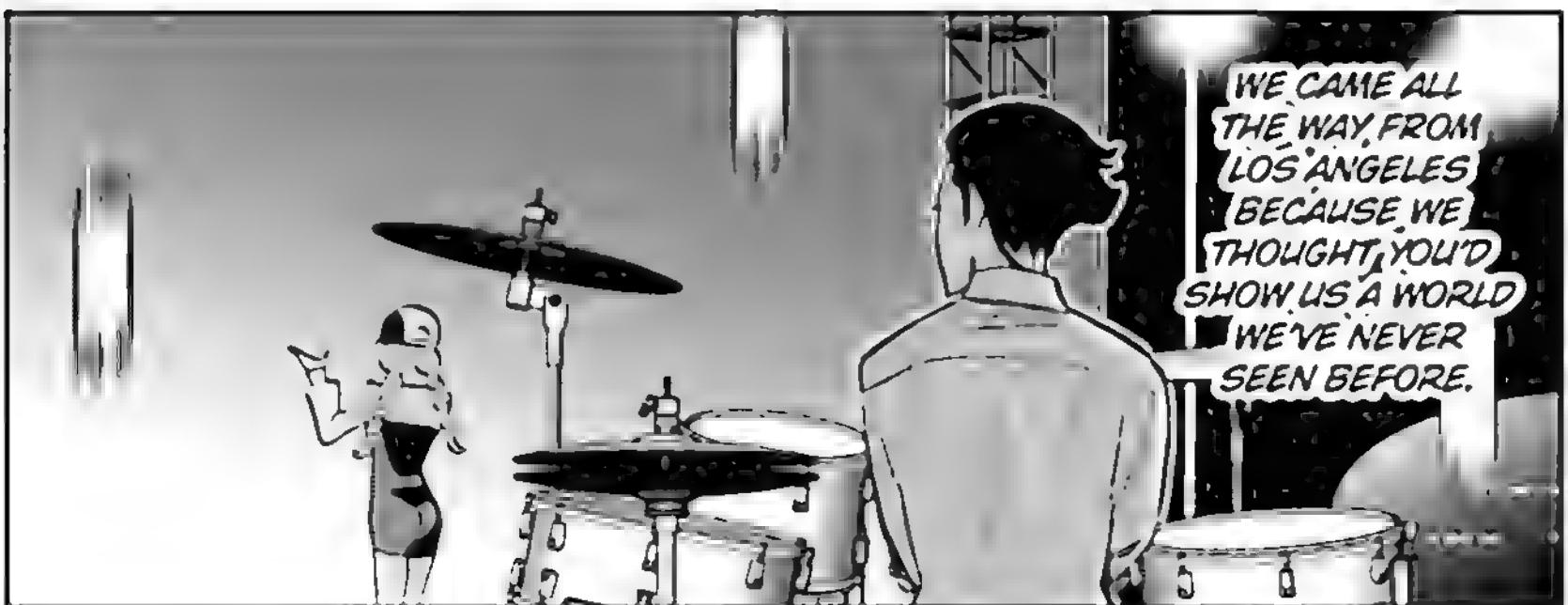


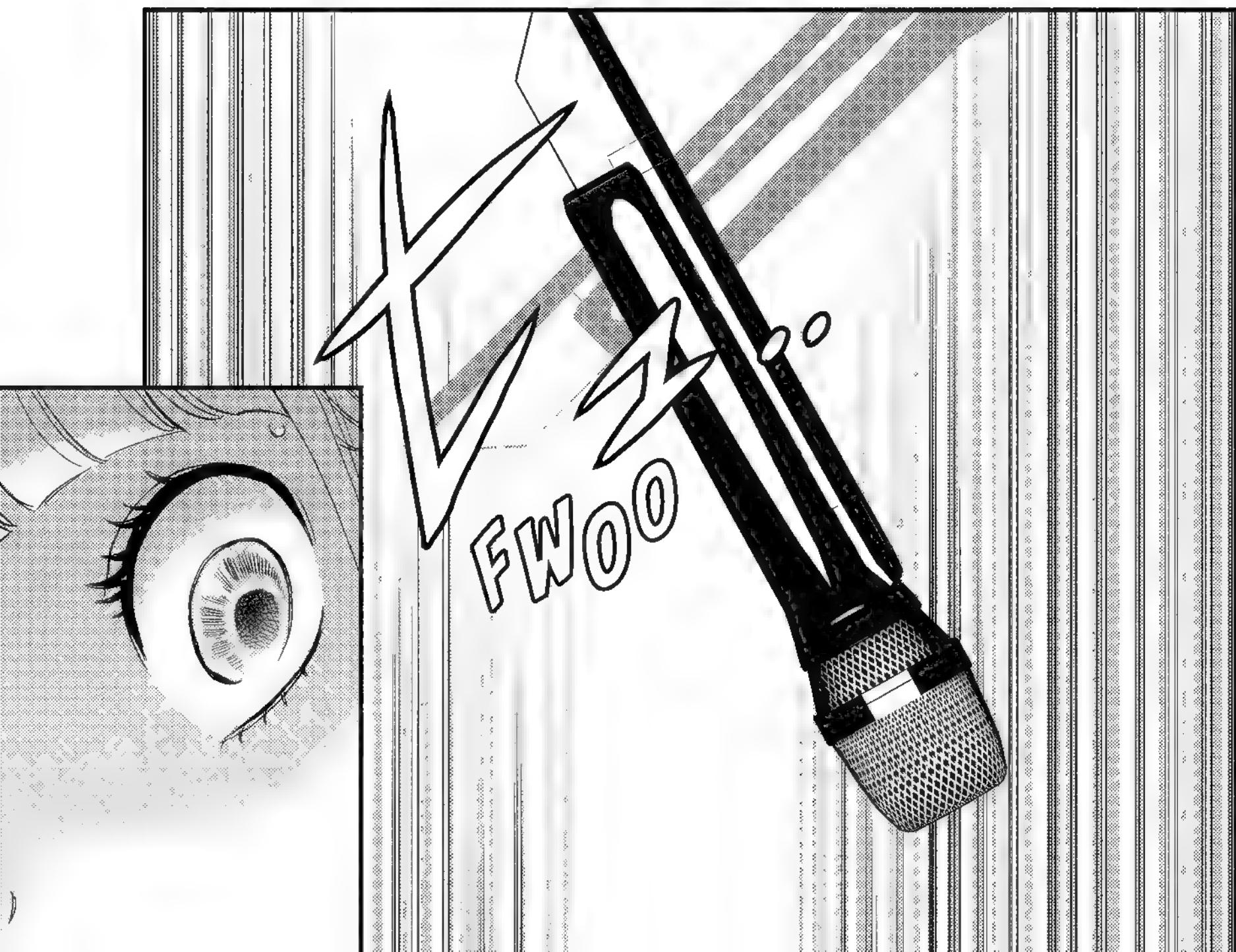
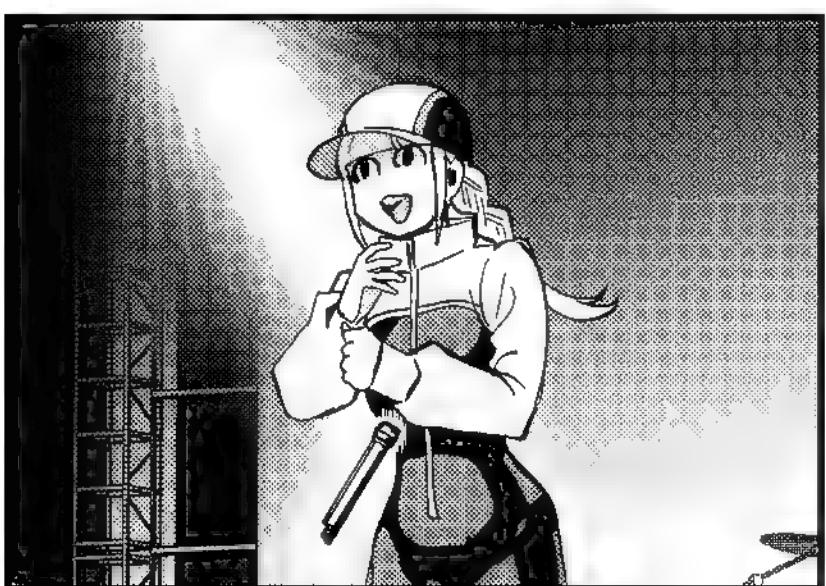
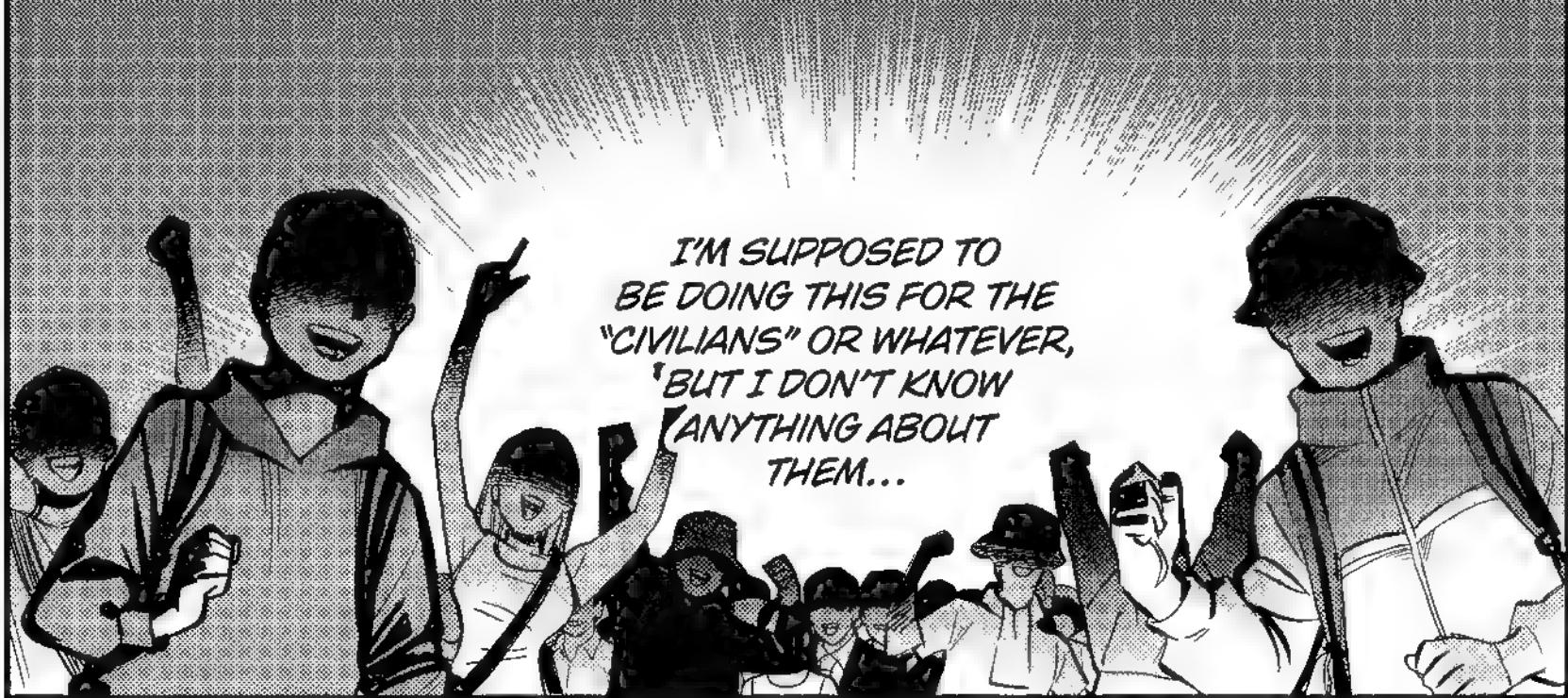
CHAPTER 101 Live Bebop

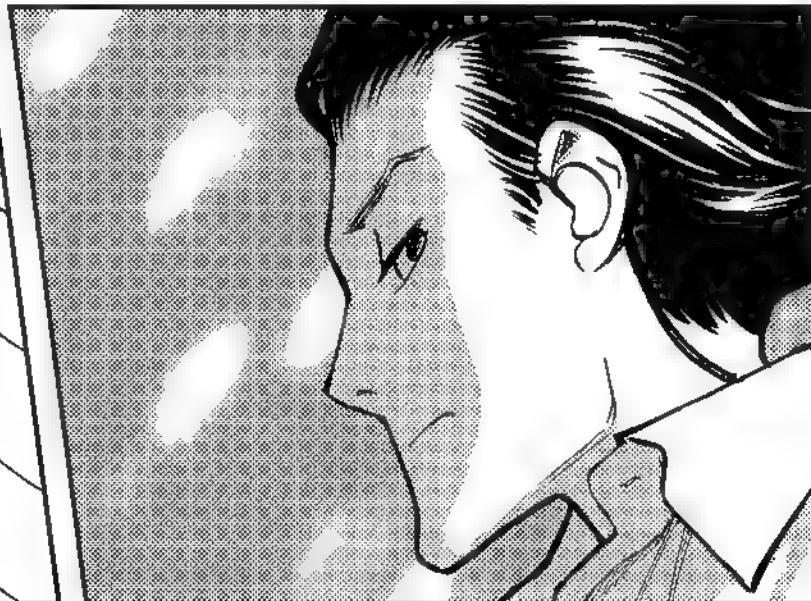


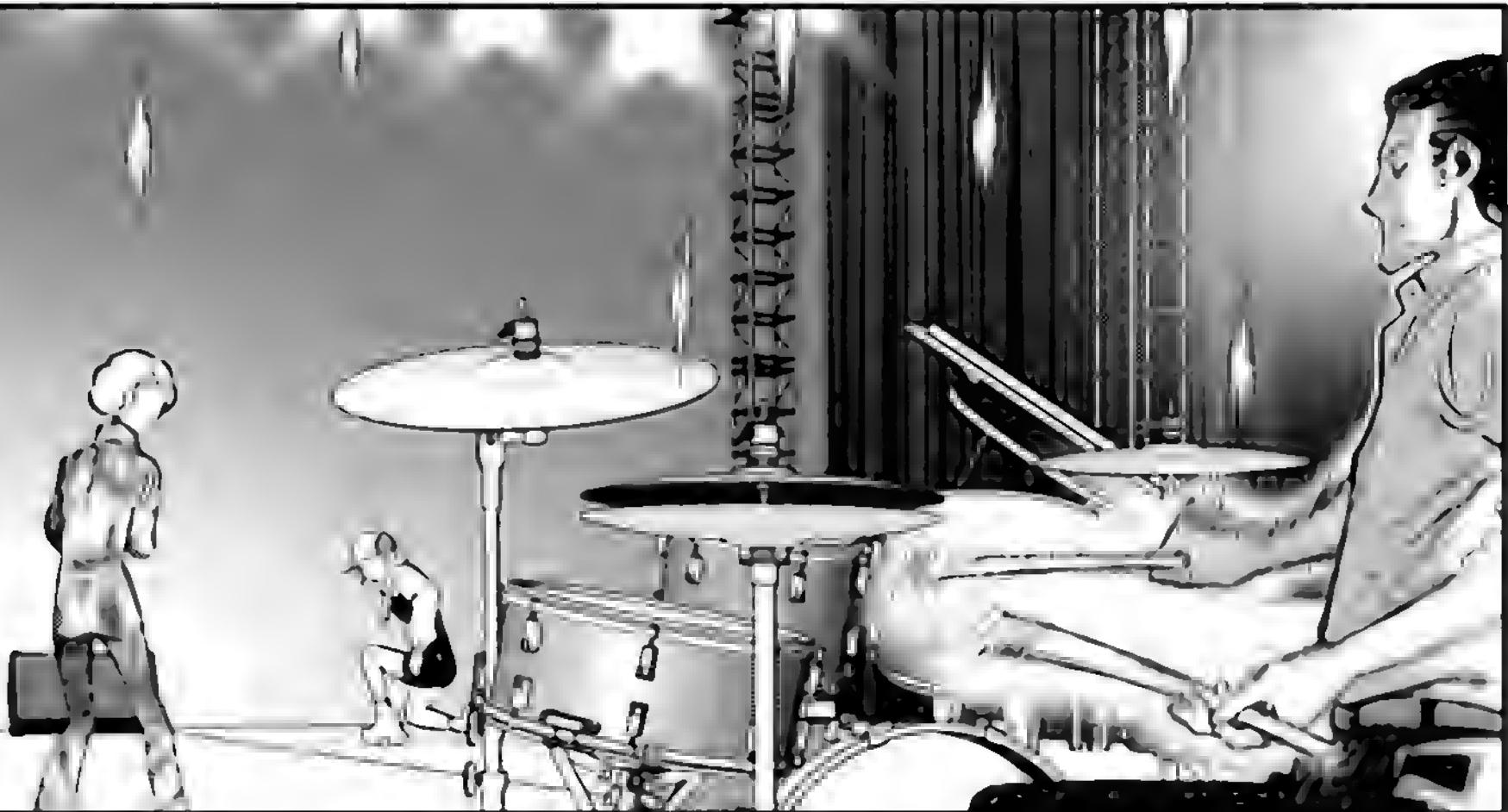
IS THIS
REALLY ALL
YOU'VE GOT,
EIKO?

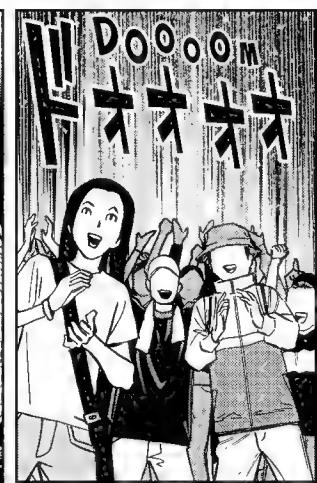
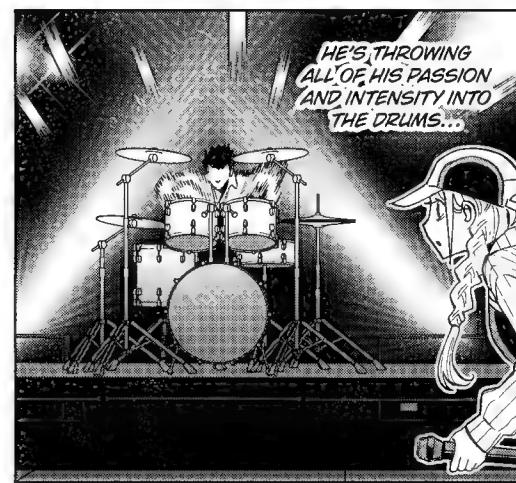
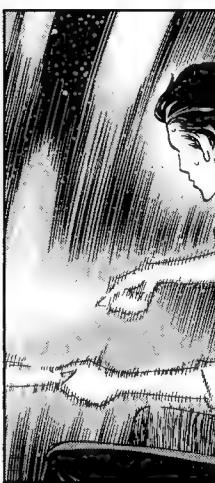


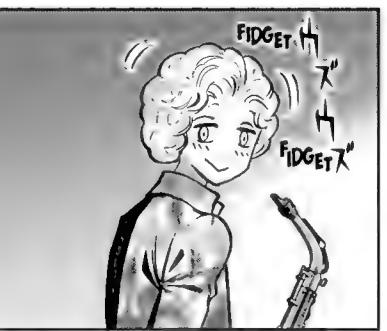
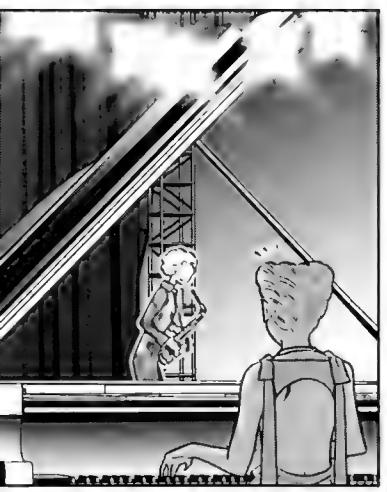




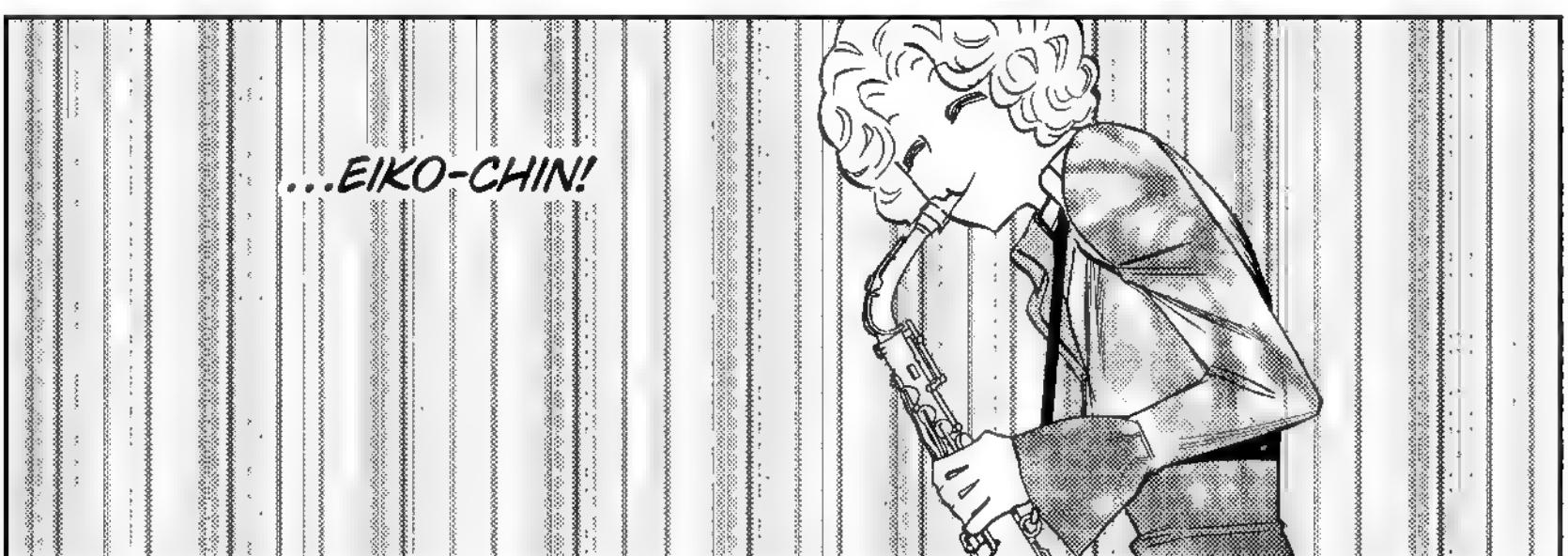
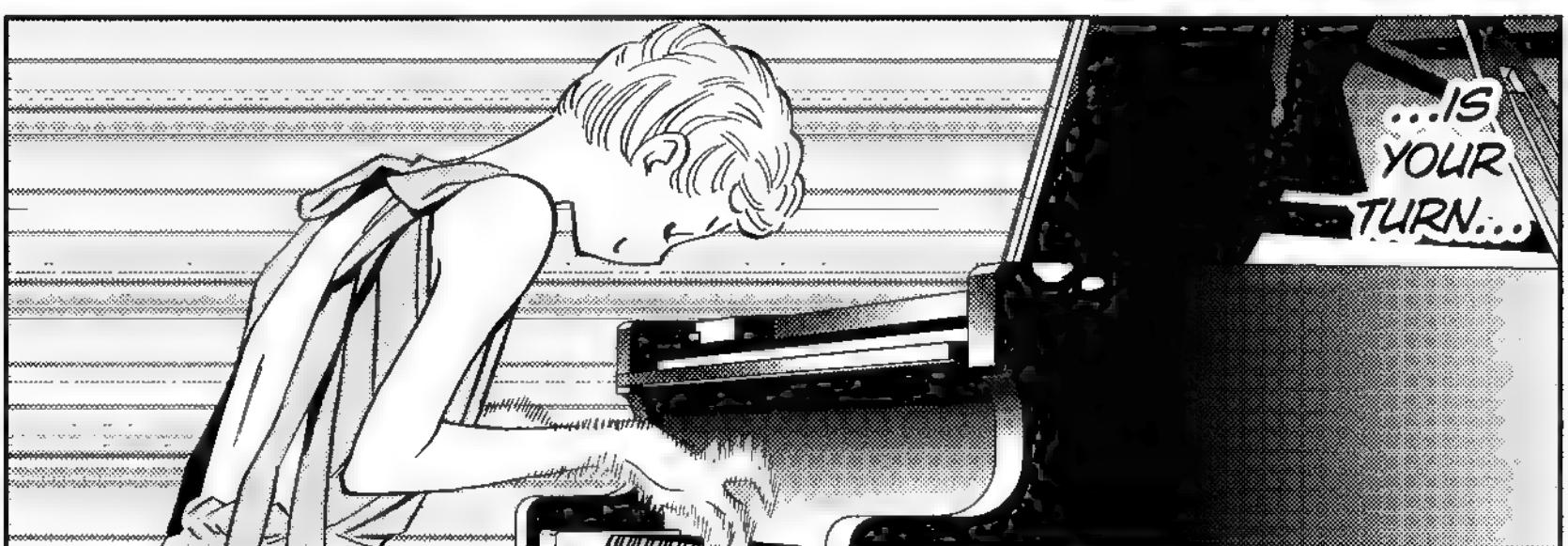




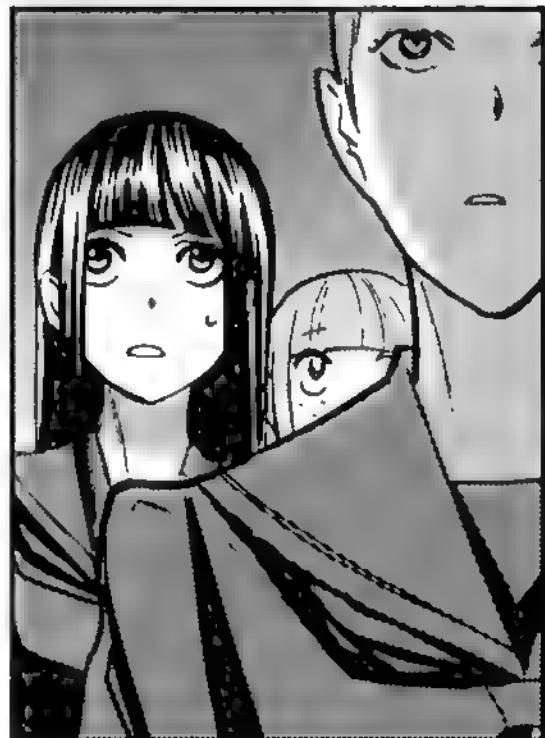
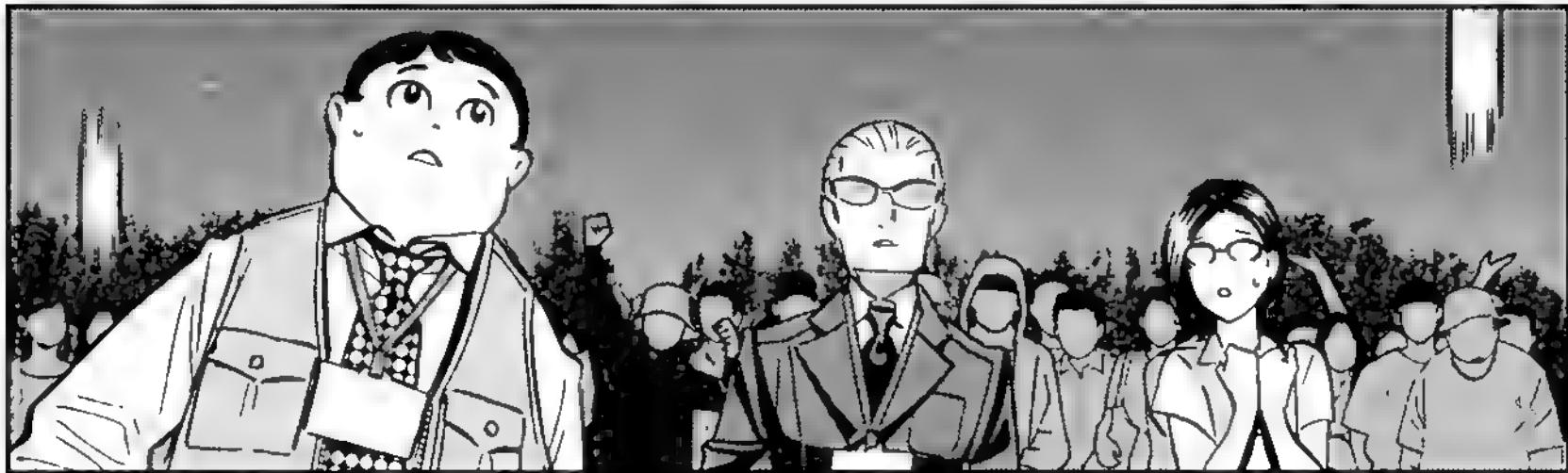
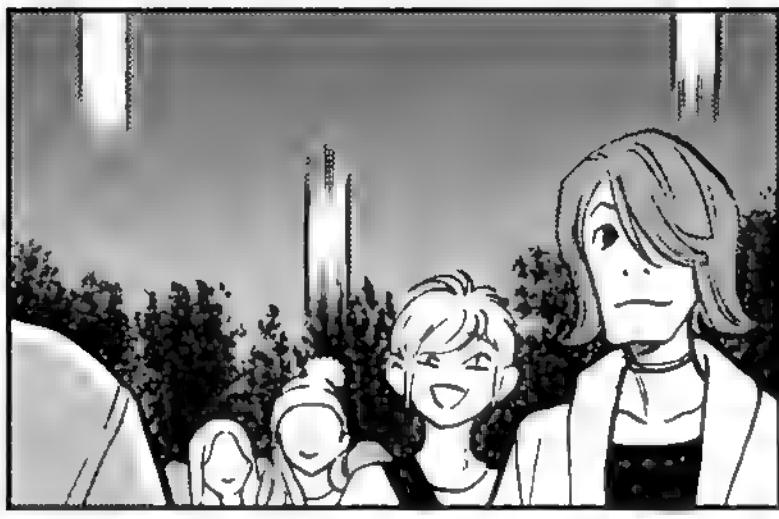


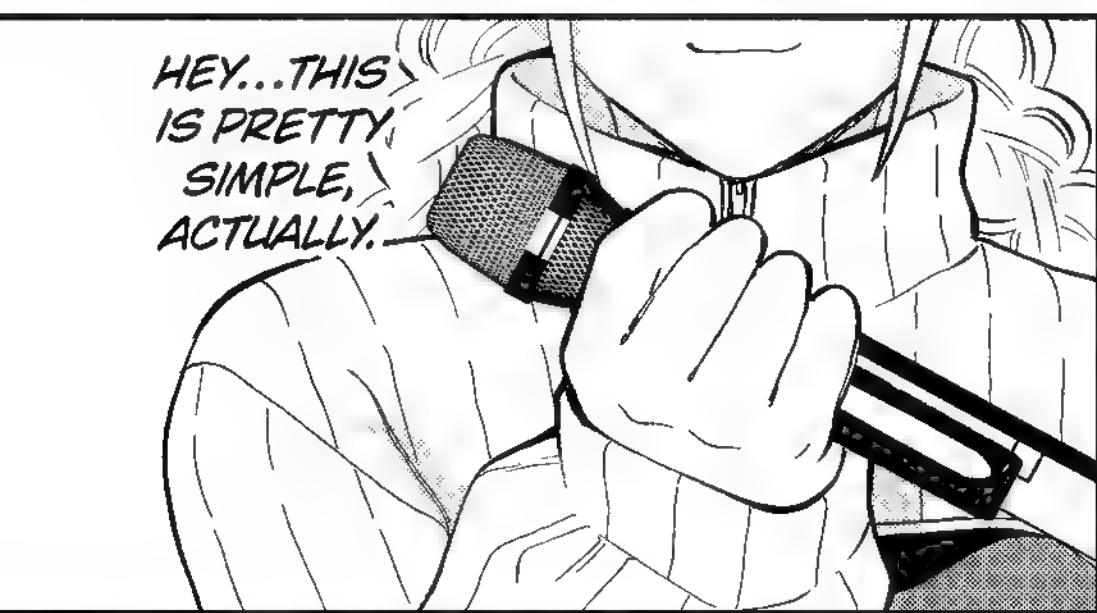
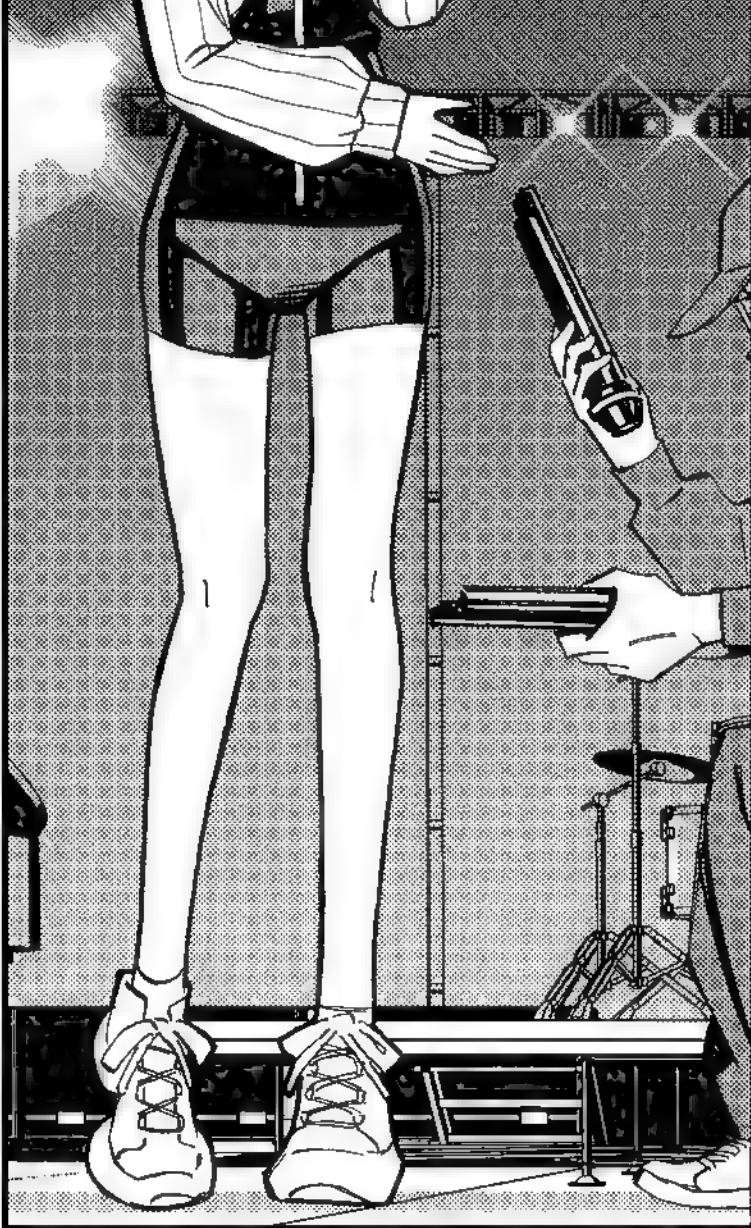








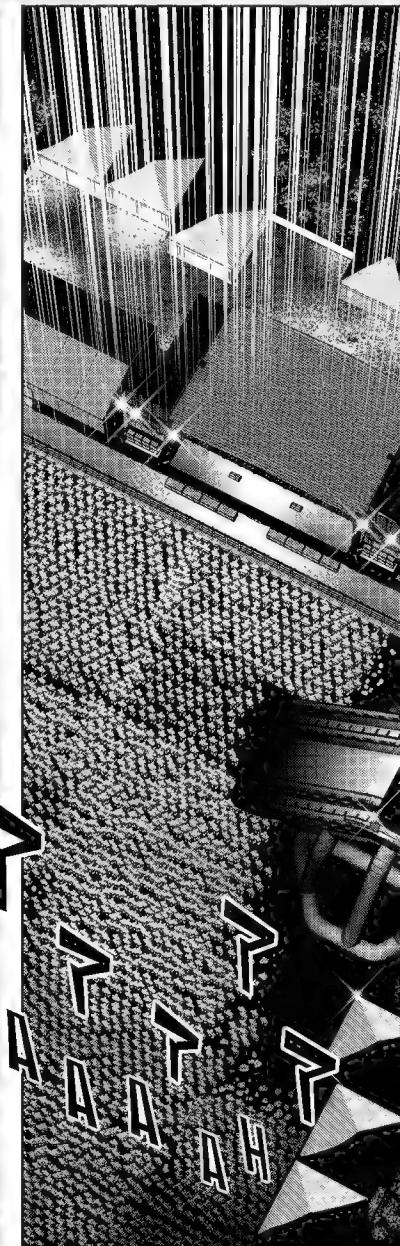
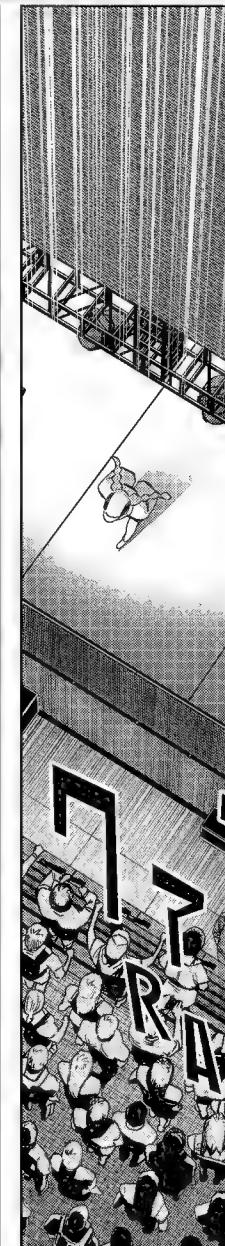




...INTO
ONE!

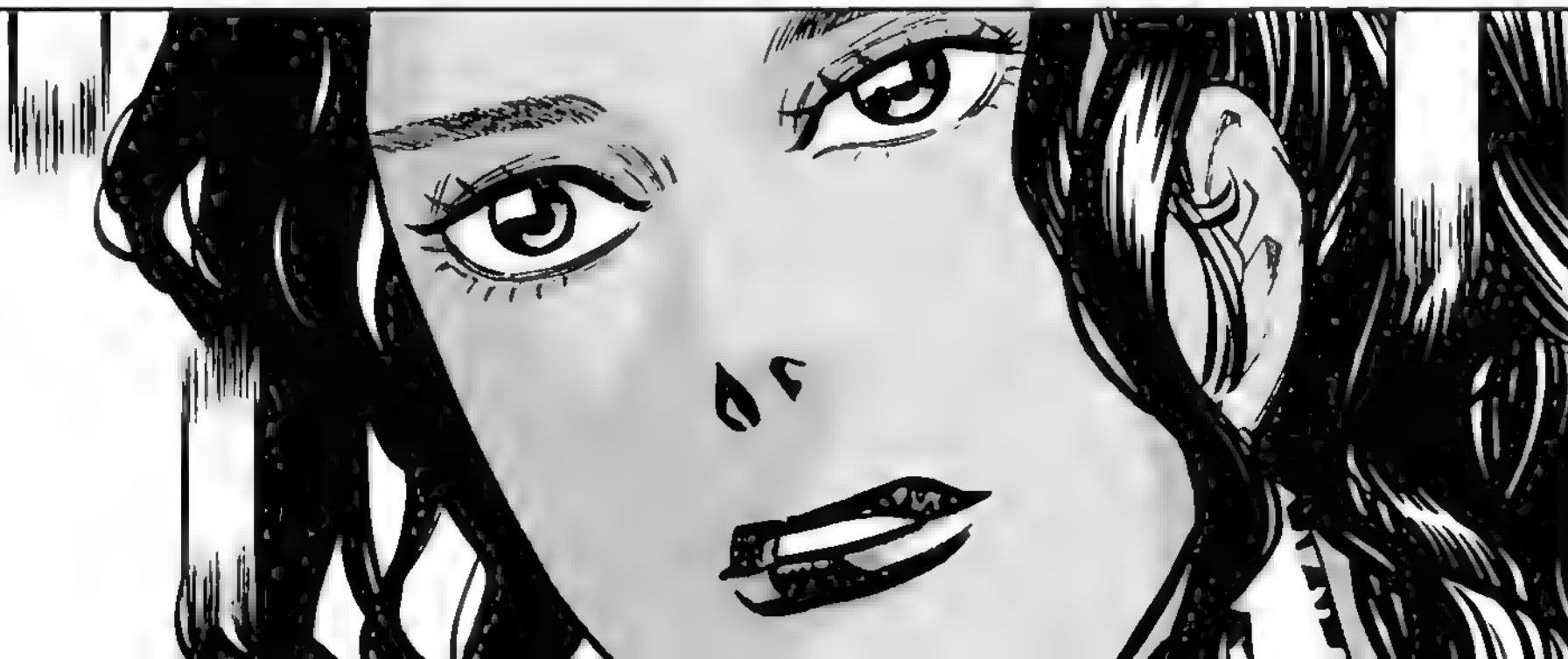


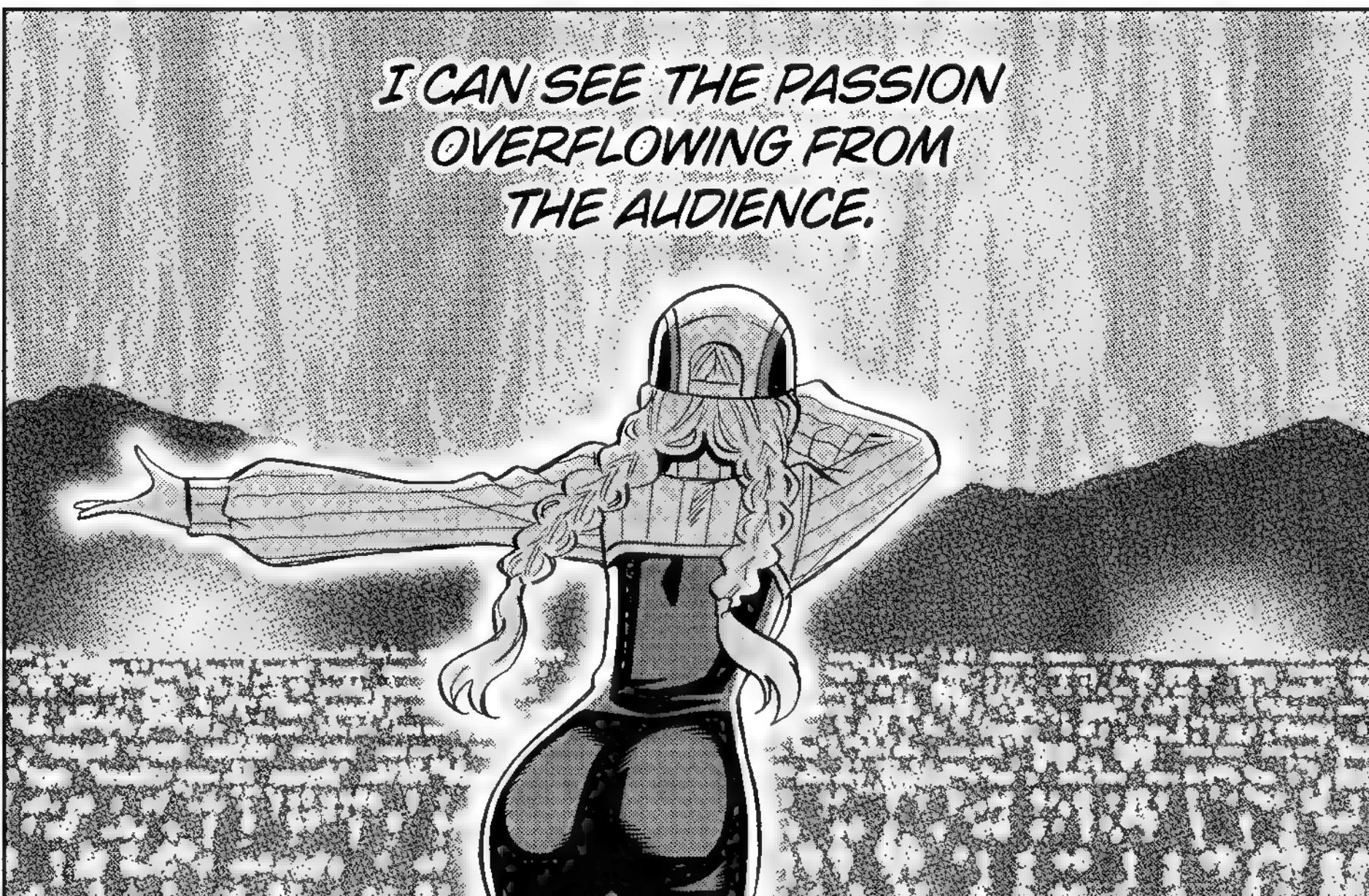
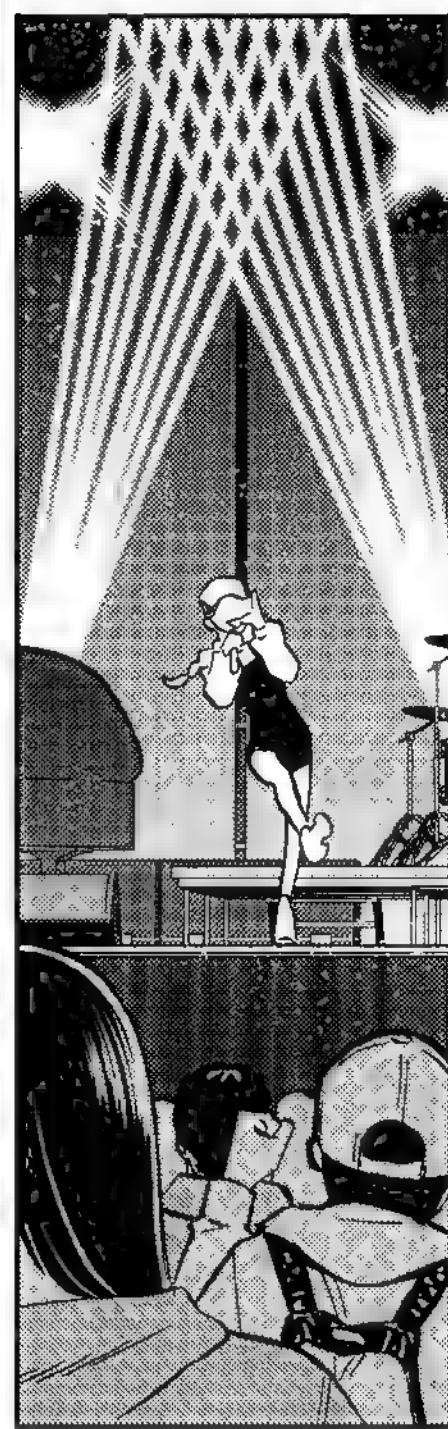
CHAPTER 101 END





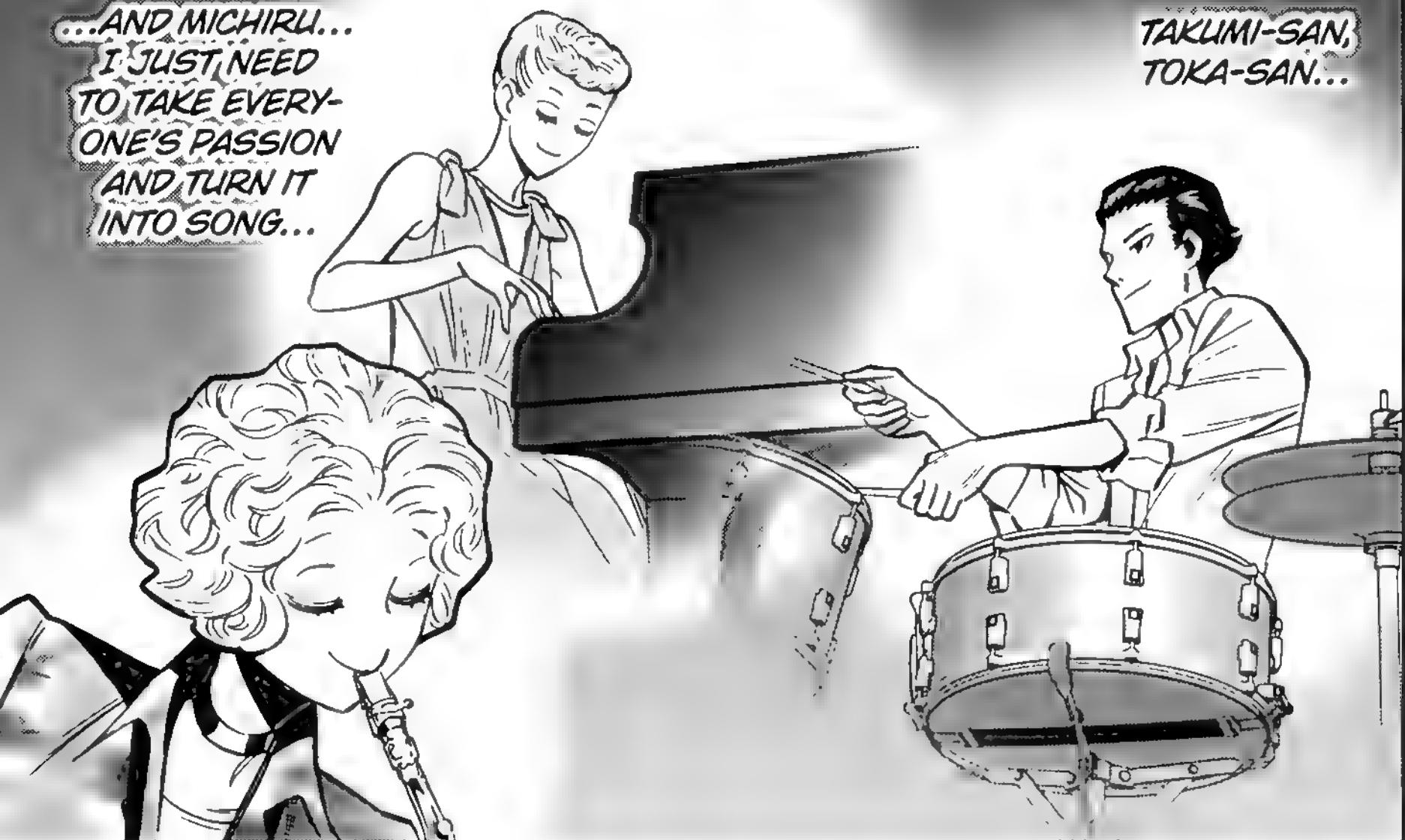
CHAPTER 102 The One Who Shines on the Great Stage





...AND MICHIRU...
I JUST NEED
TO TAKE EVERY-
ONE'S PASSION
AND TURN IT
INTO SONG...

TAKUMI-SAN,
TOKA-SAN...

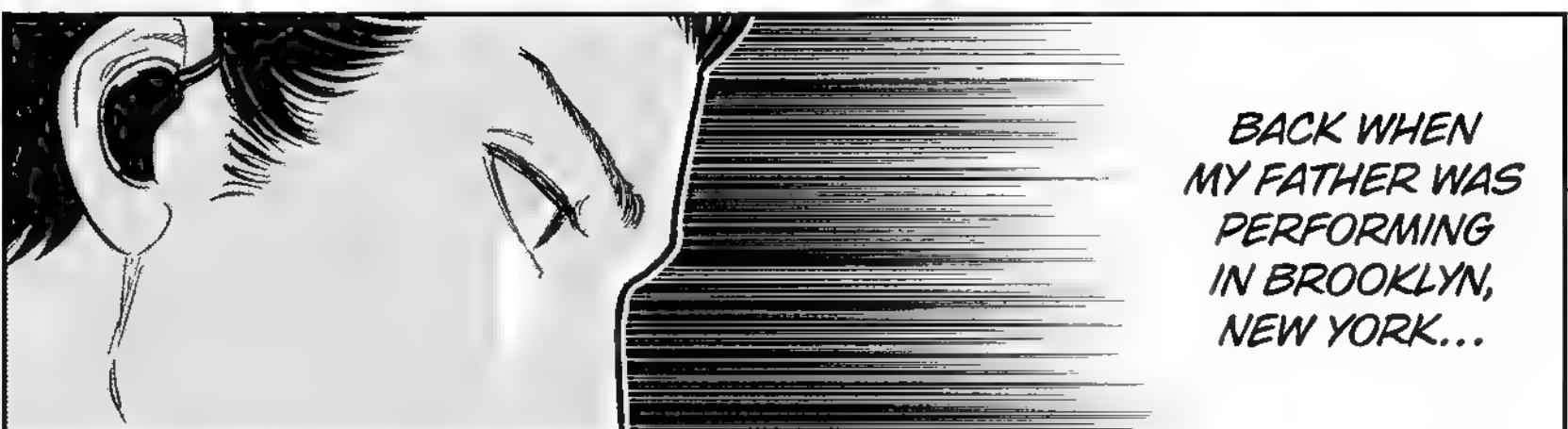


...THEN THE
AUDIENCE WILL
RESPOND TO
OUR FERVOR...

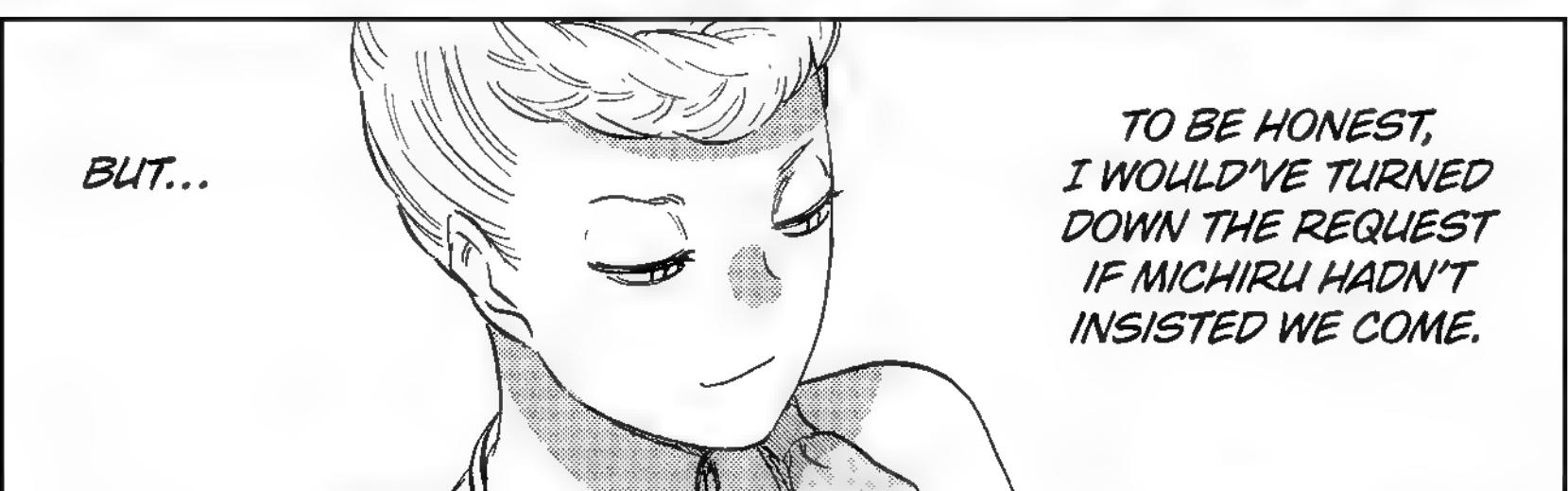
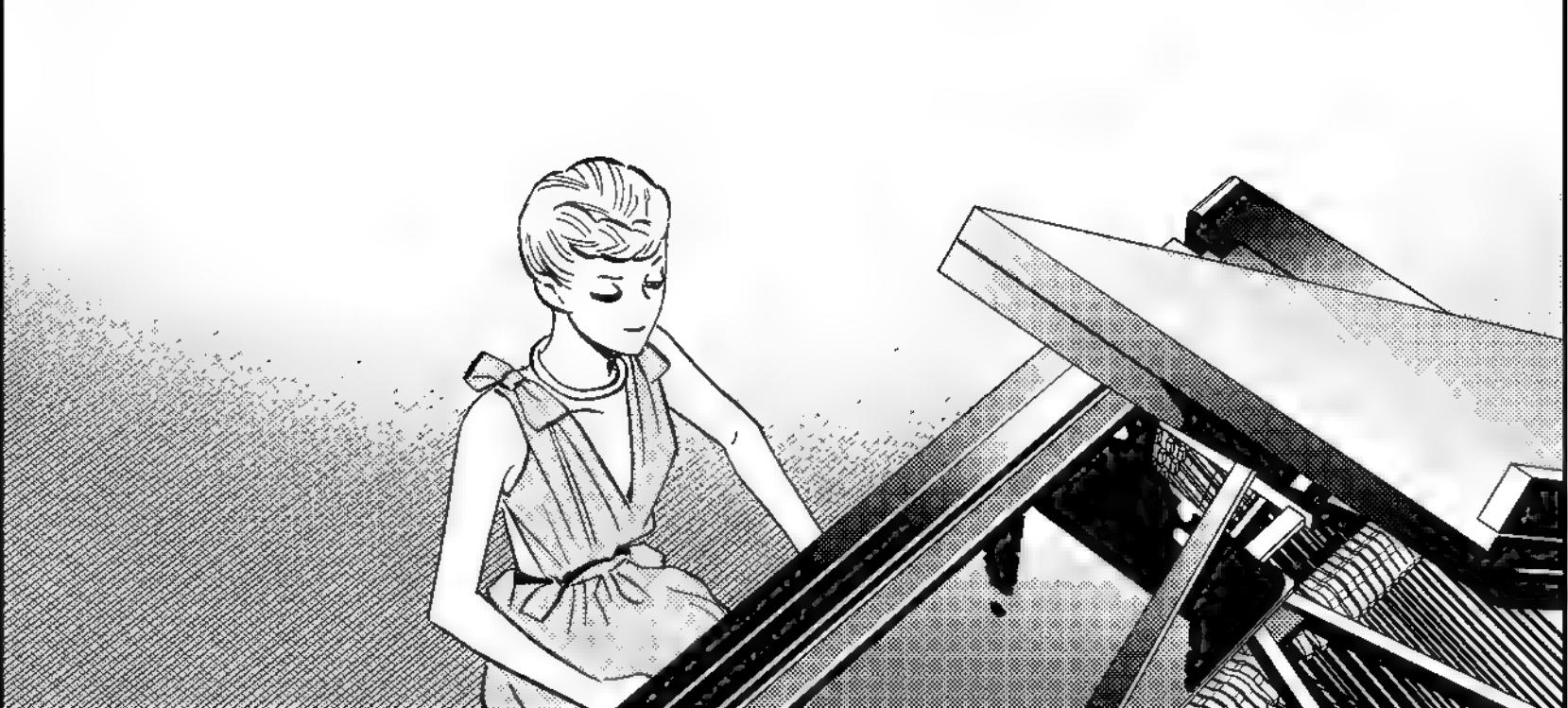


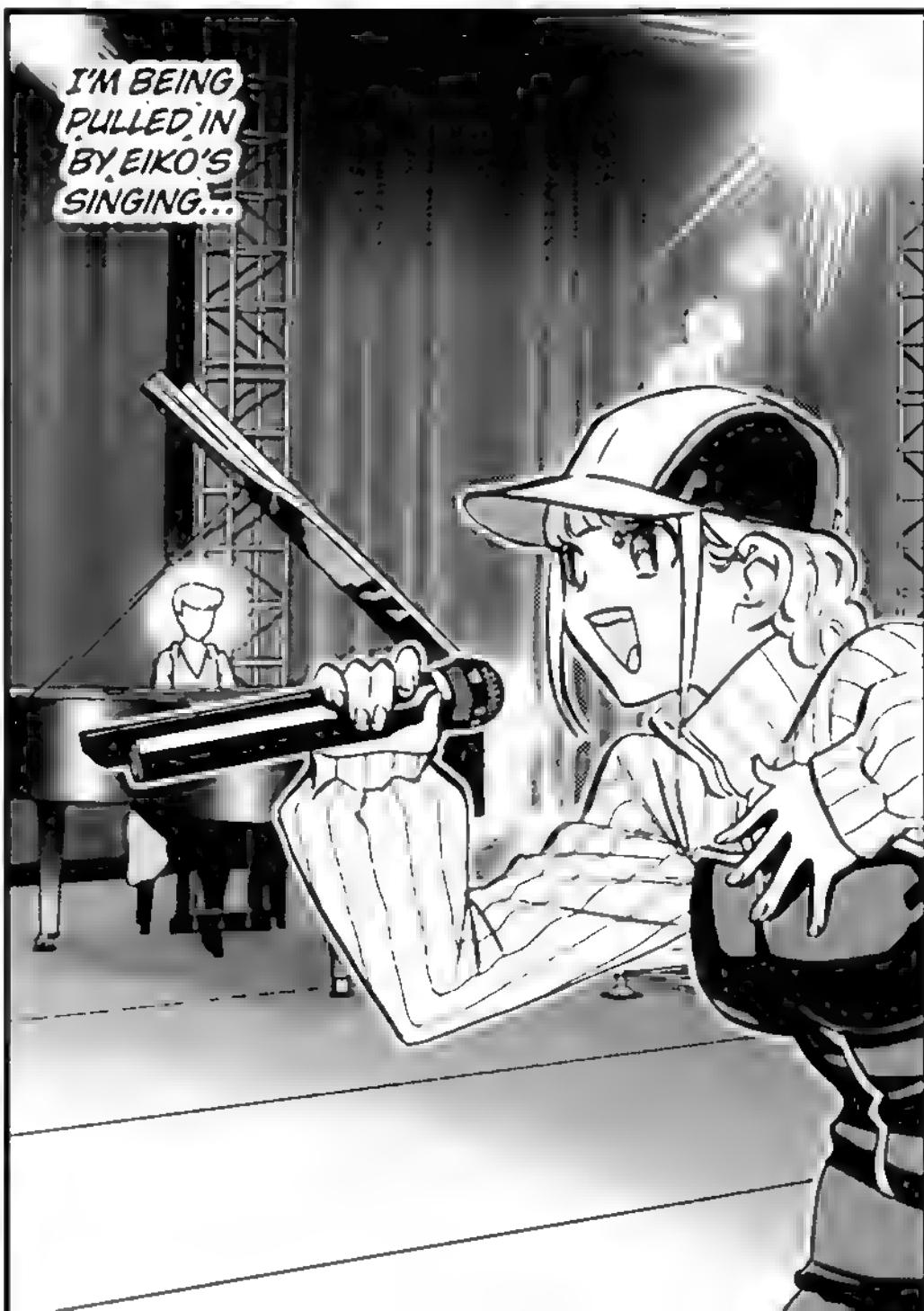
NOTHING CAN BEAT
THIS FEELING!

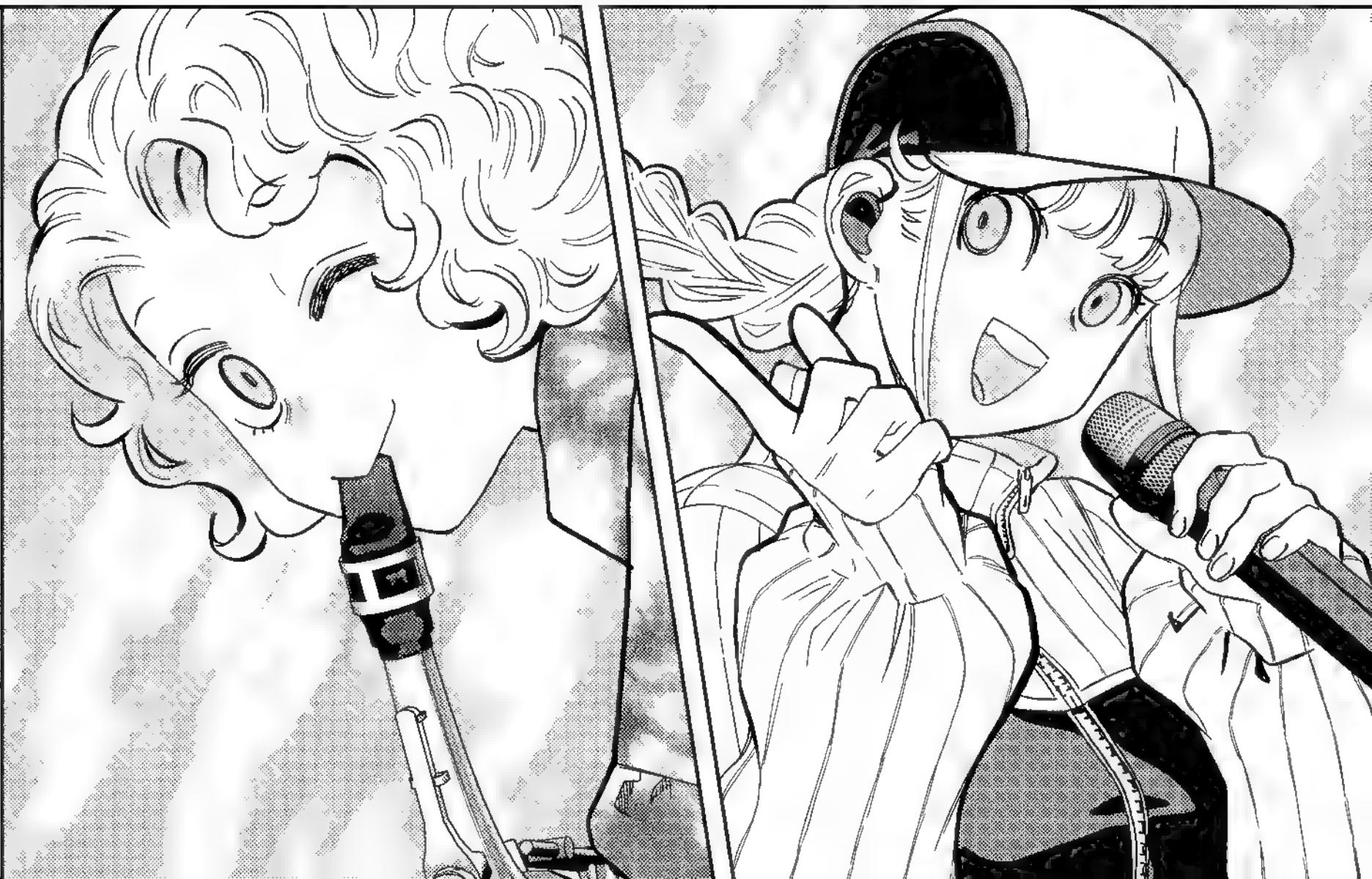




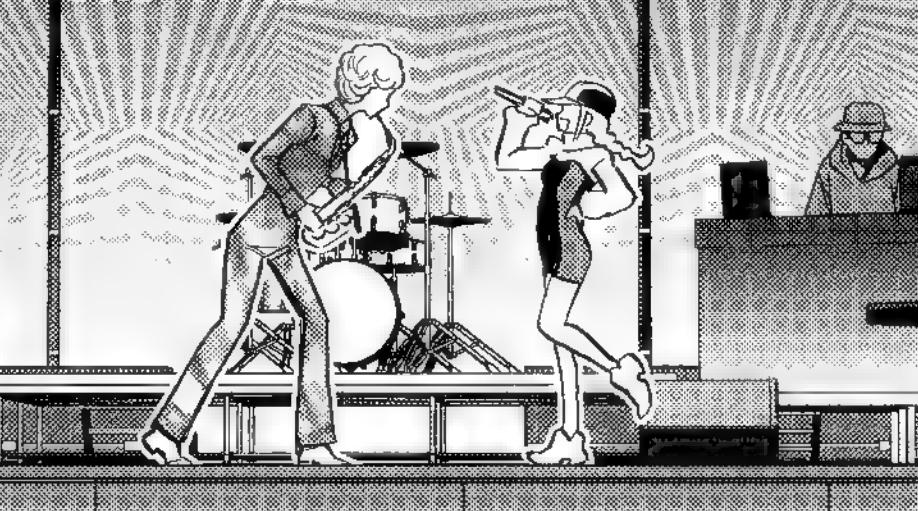








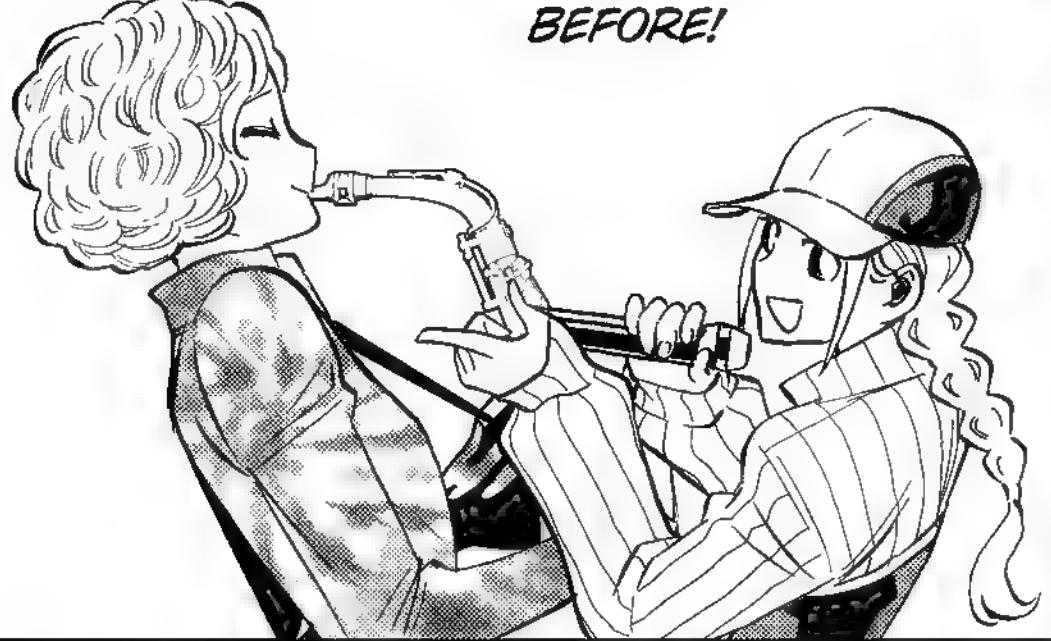
I'M SO GLAD
I CAME AND
STOOD ON THIS
STAGE TODAY!



EVERYONE'S
COMING
TOGETHER
THROUGH
MUSIC!

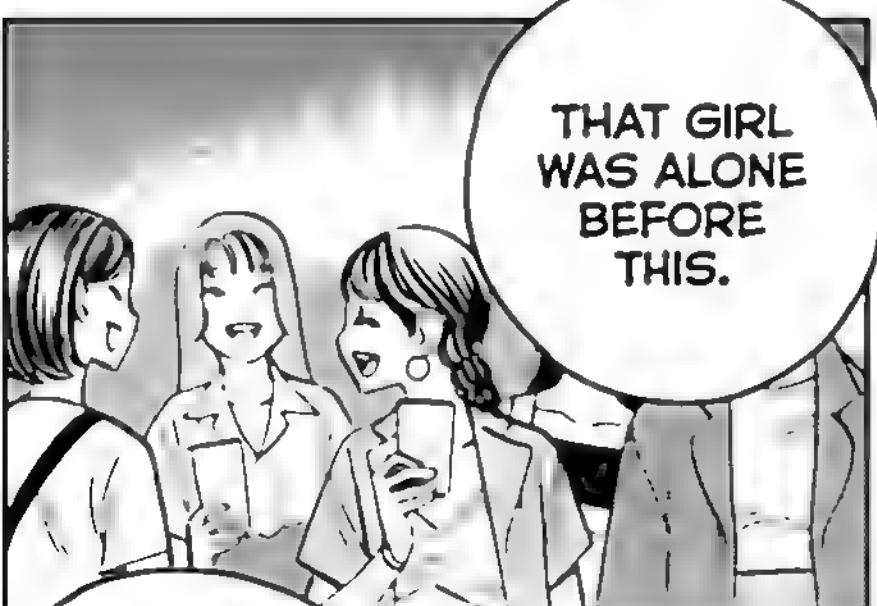


I'VE NEVER
FELT THIS
BEFORE!



YOU'RE REALLY
SOMETHING
ELSE, EIKO-CHIN!





SHE'S
AT A TOTAL
DISADVANTAGE,
BUT THAT DOESN'T
CHANGE HER...

THIS IS
EIKO'S FIRST
PERFORMANCE
AT SUMMER SONIA.
SHE'S SINGING ON
A STAGE SHE'S
NOT USED TO.



KER-SHAK
KER-SHAK
KER-SHAK

...AND
BRING THEM
TOGETHER
AS ONE!

...SHE STILL
MANAGES
TO UNITE
THE WHOLE
CONCERT...



YOU HAVE THE
ESSENCE OF A
COMMANDER...



LADY
EIKO...





YOU UNDERSTAND
WHAT IS NECESSARY TO
UNITE THE THOUSANDS
OF CIVILIANS AS ONE
THROUGH YOUR VOICE.



YOU SUCCESSFULLY
BROUGHT SMILES ONTO
THE FACES OF THE PEOPLE
THROUGH PEACEFUL
MEANS, CONNECTING
EACH INDIVIDUAL TO
EVERY OTHER...

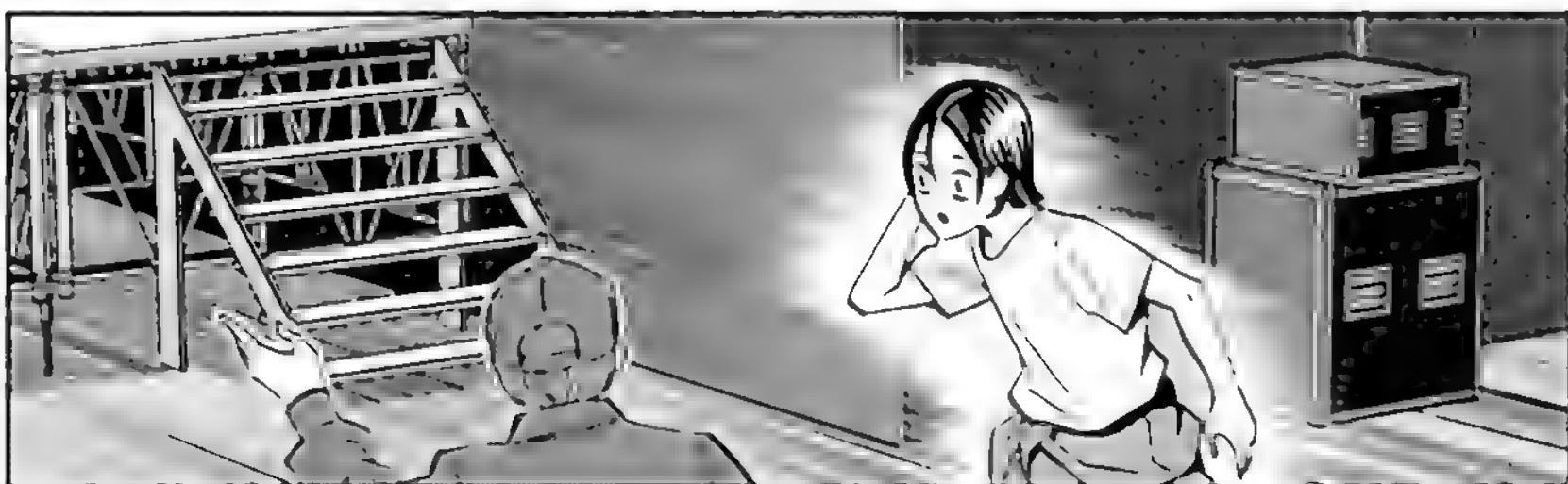
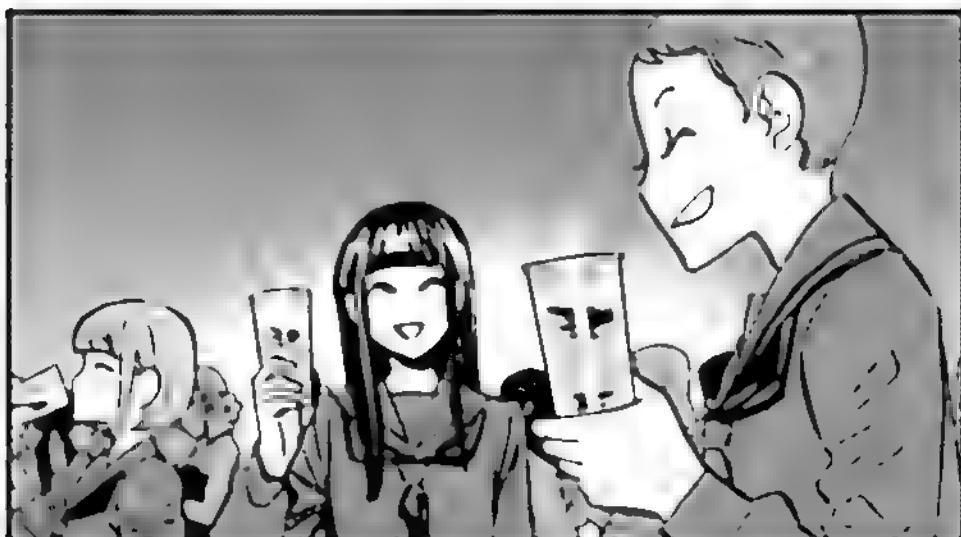
LET'S
JOIN 'EM!
CARRY
HIM OVER!

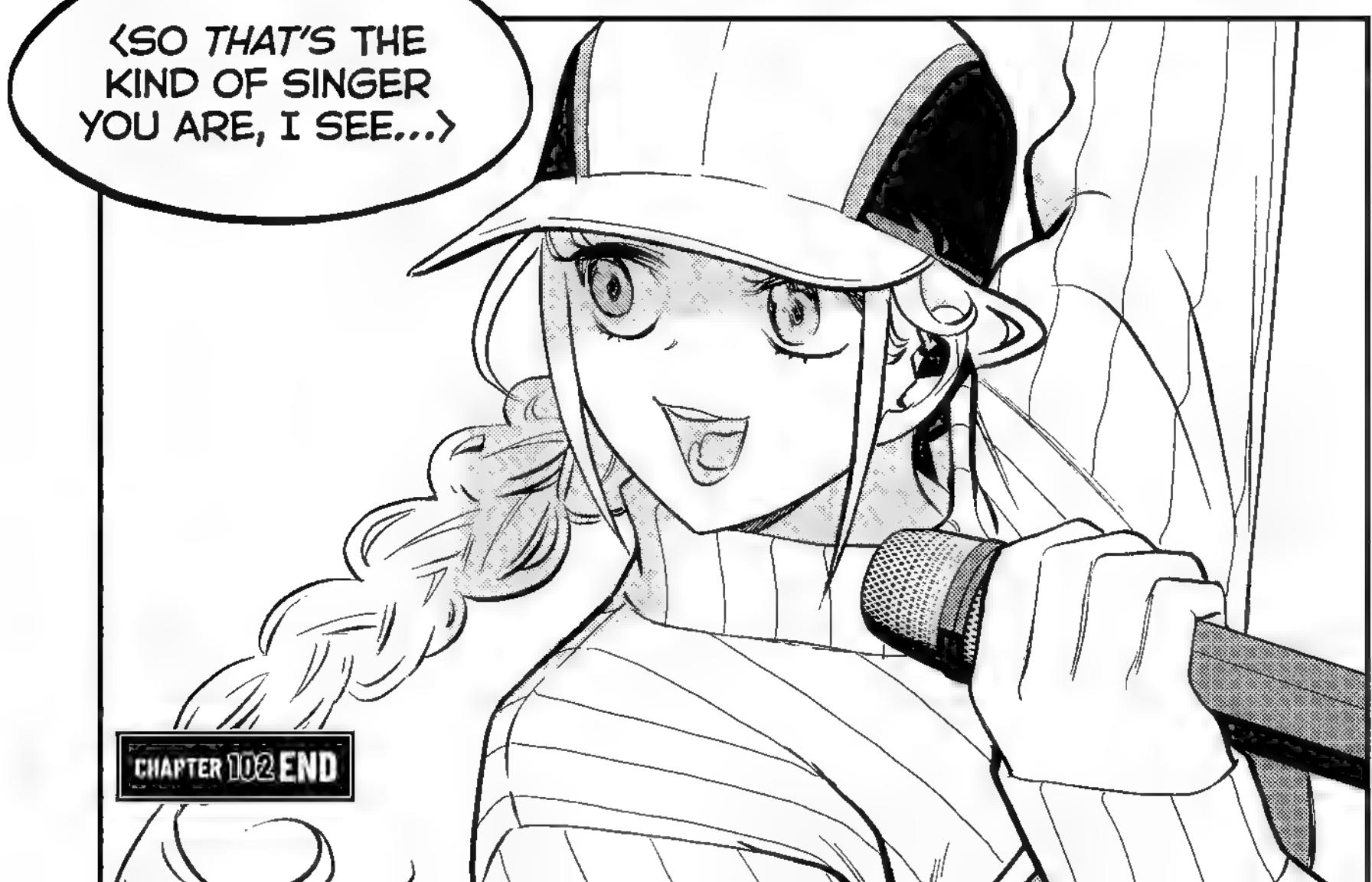
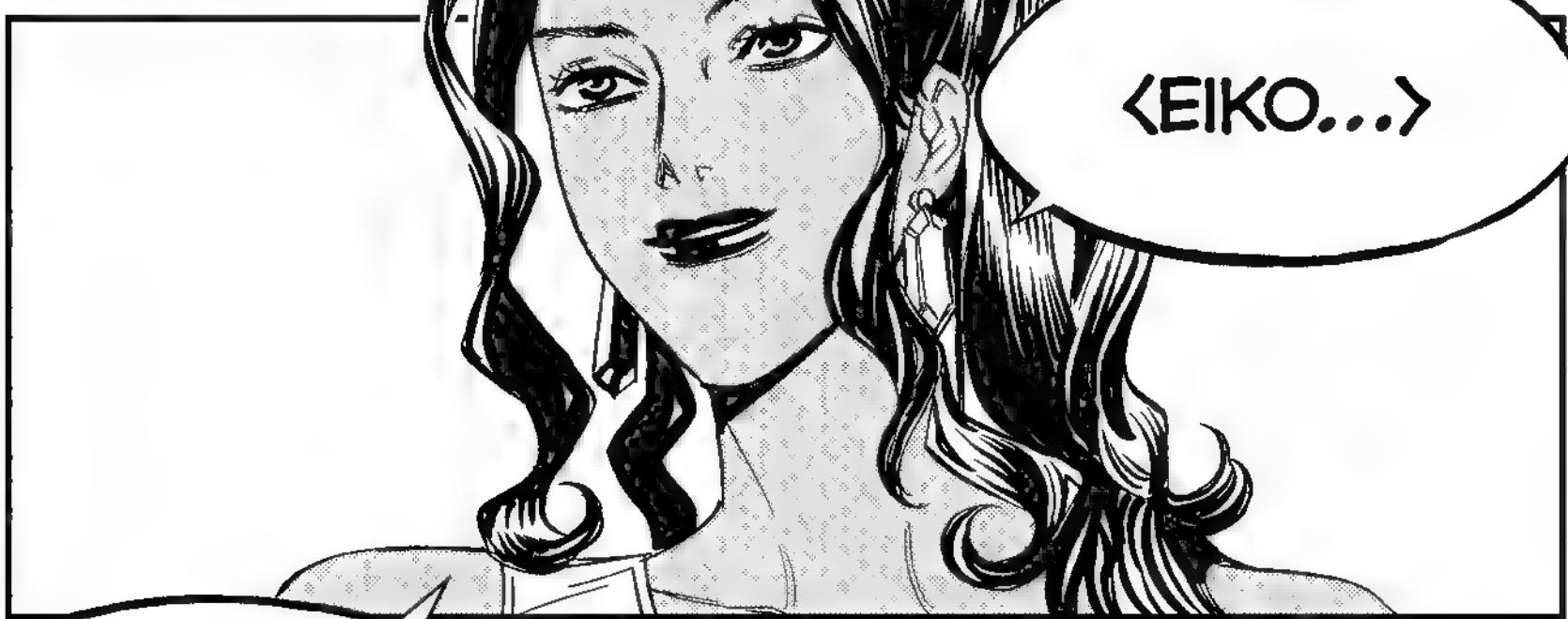
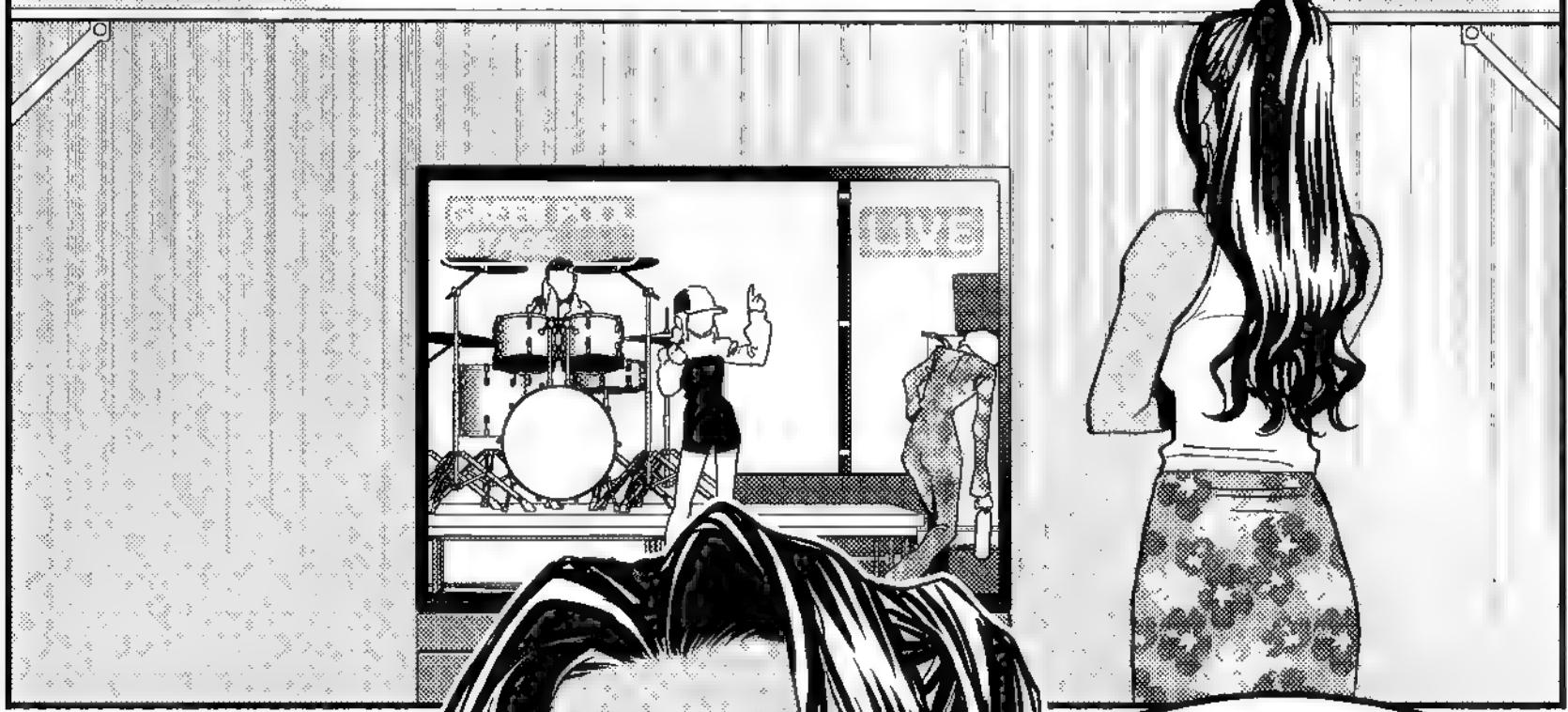
HEY!
THERE'S
SOME GUY
IN A WEIRD
COSPLAY!

...IS THE EXACT
DEFINITION...

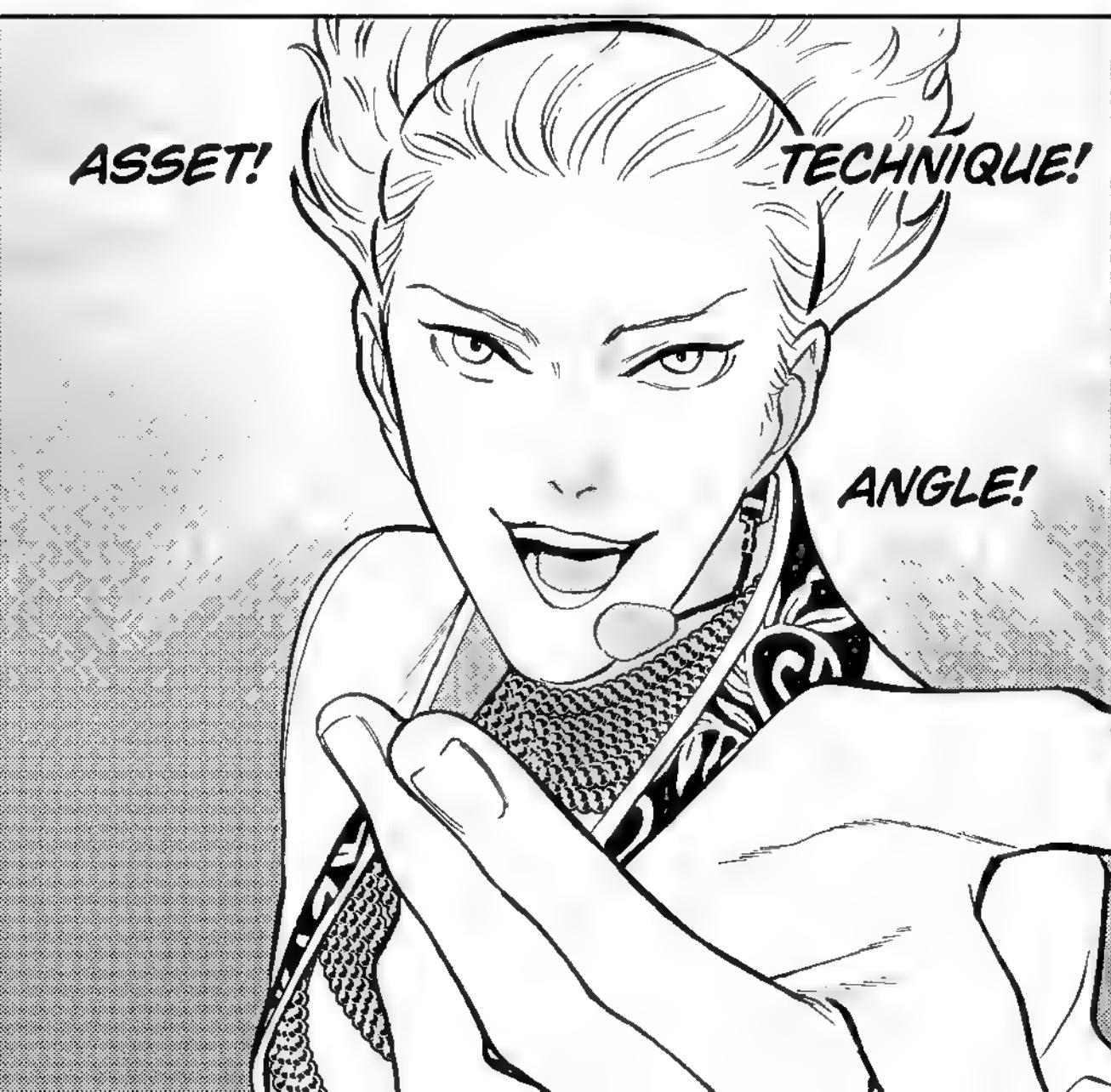
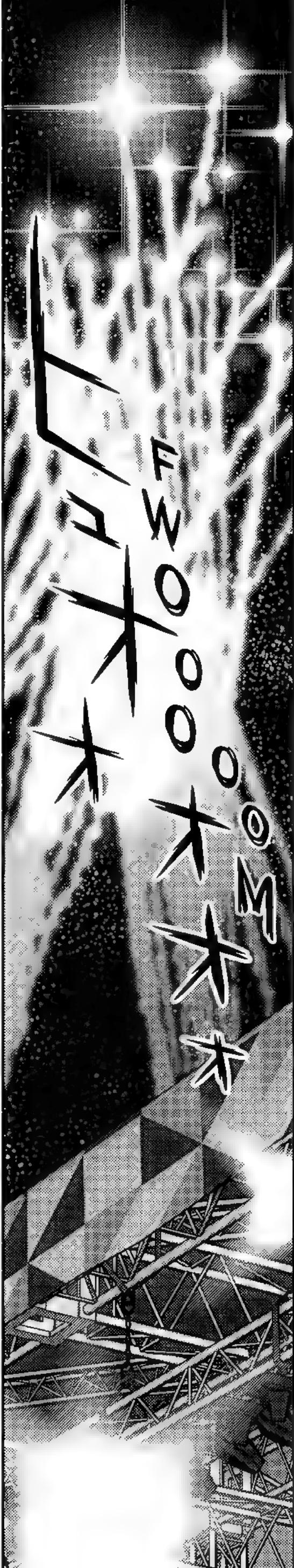
THIS SENSE
OF UNITY
HERE...











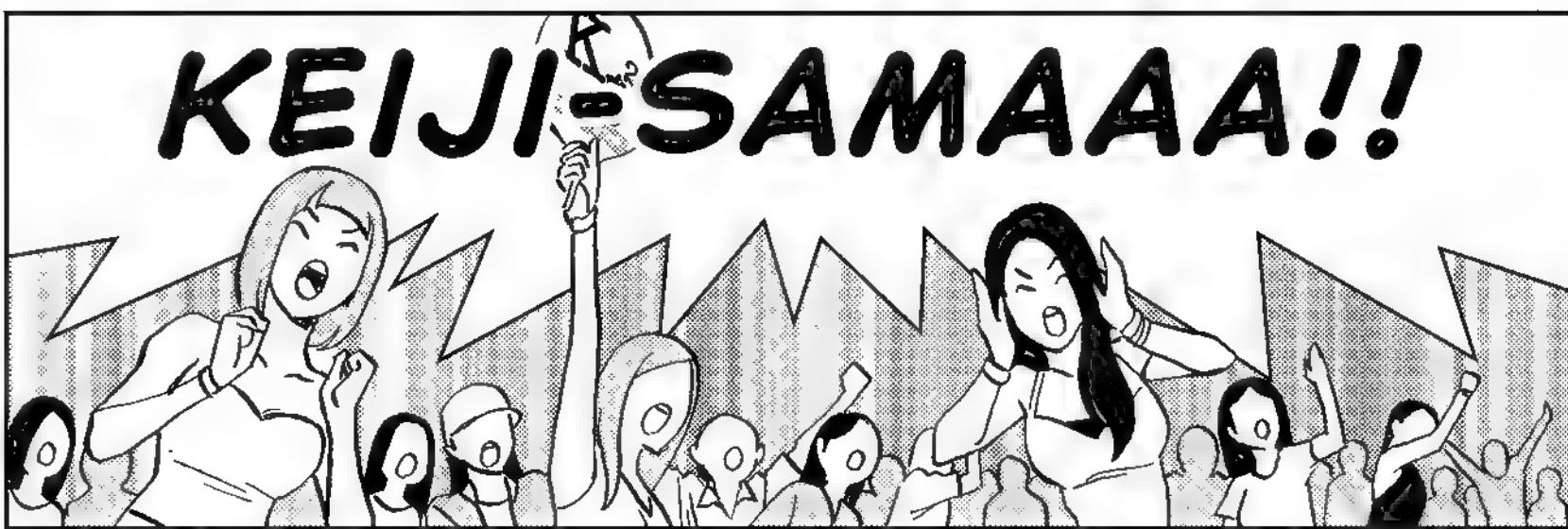
...BASED PURELY ON
THE DATA DENPOSHA
COLLECTED.

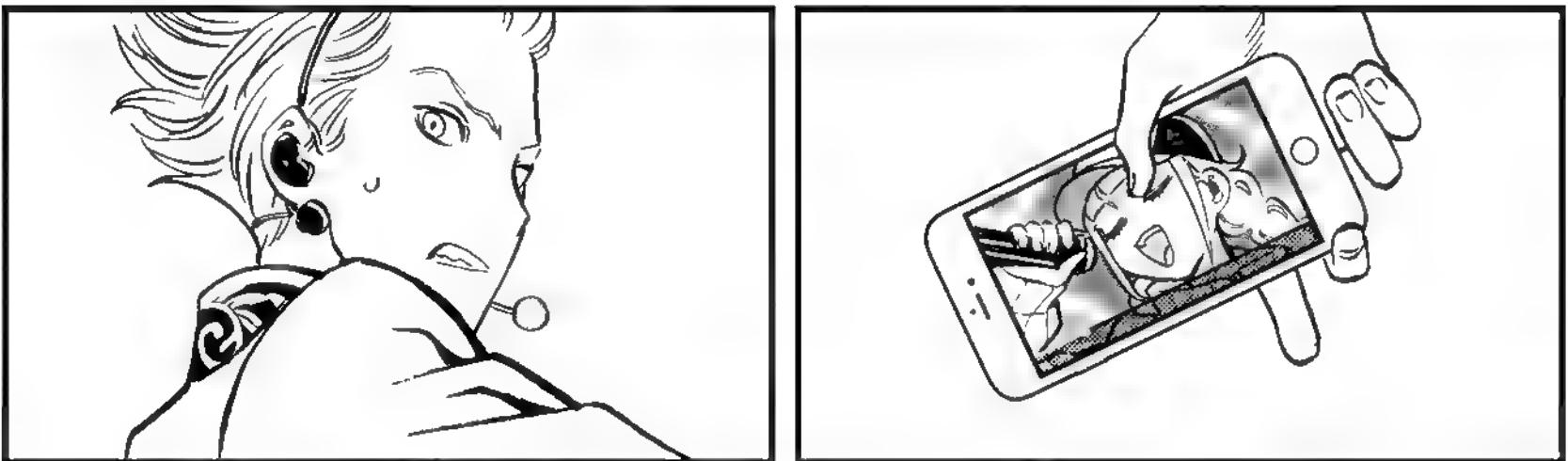
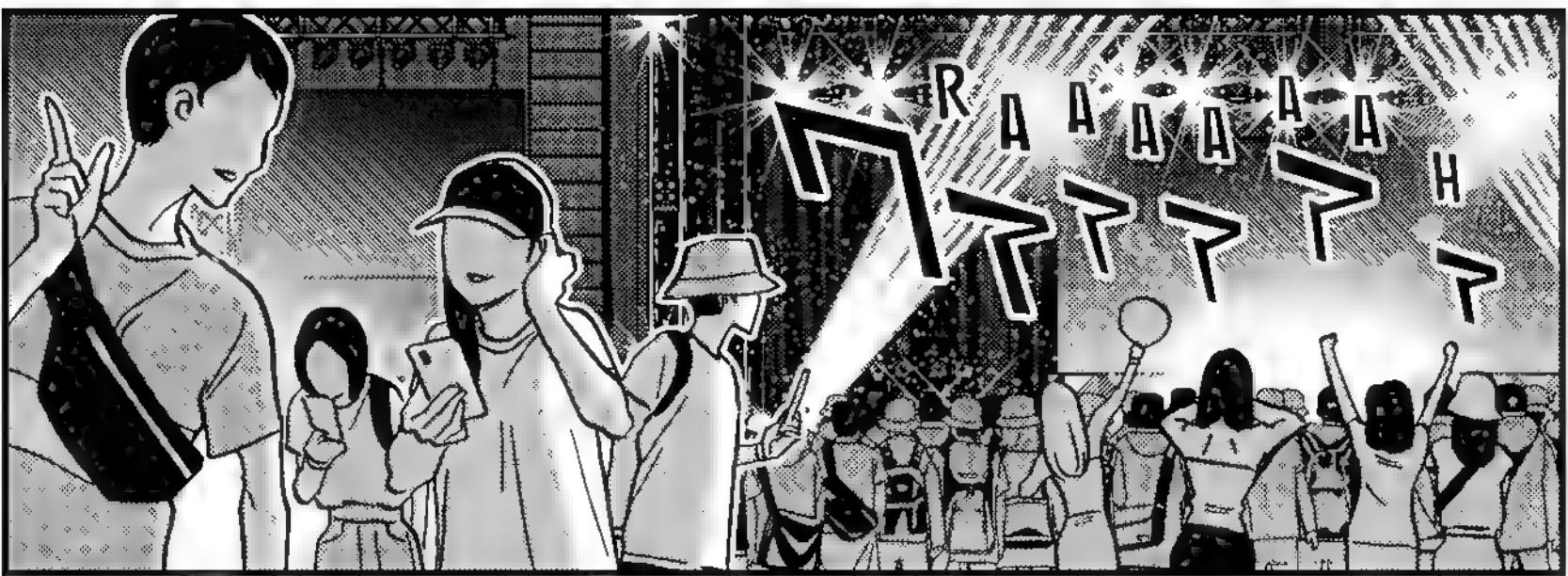
I CAN BRING OUT
THE MOST EFFECTIVE
PERFORMANCE..

I JUST NEED
THE AUDIENCE
TO GET DRUNK
ON ME.

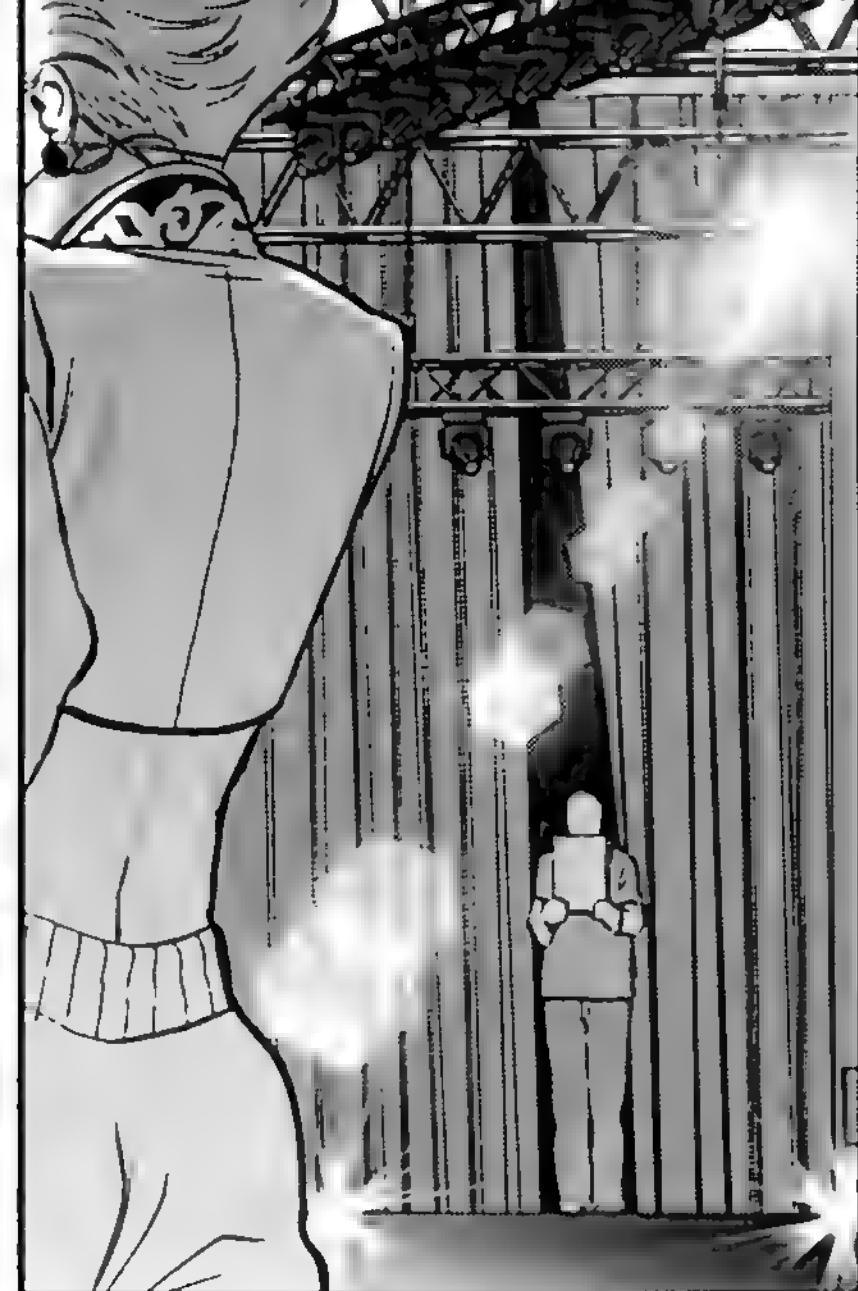


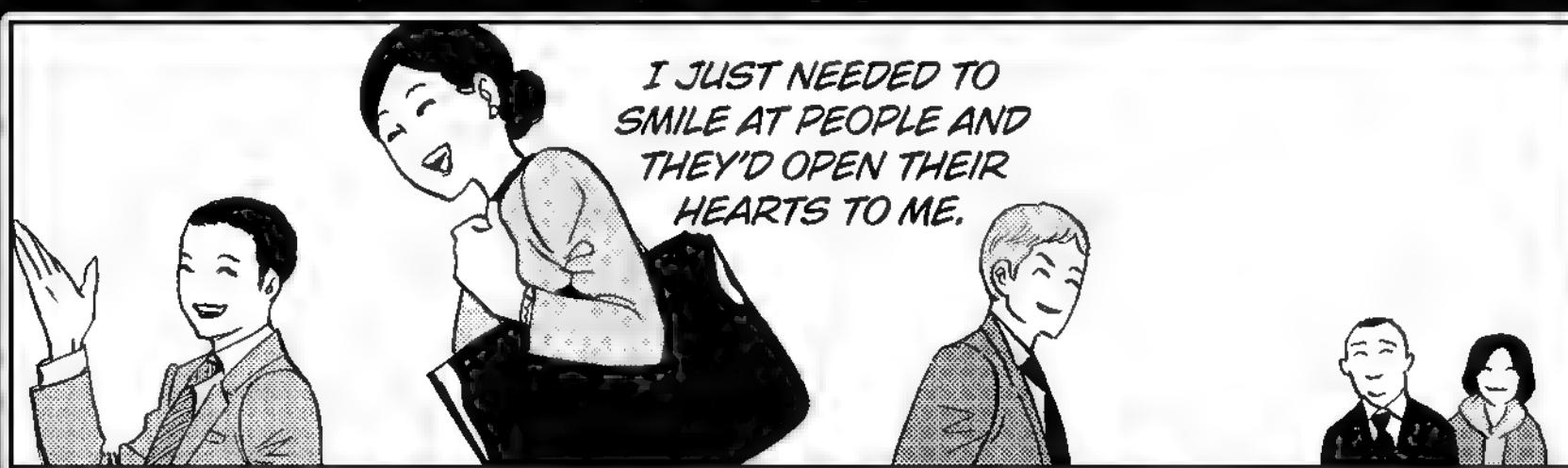
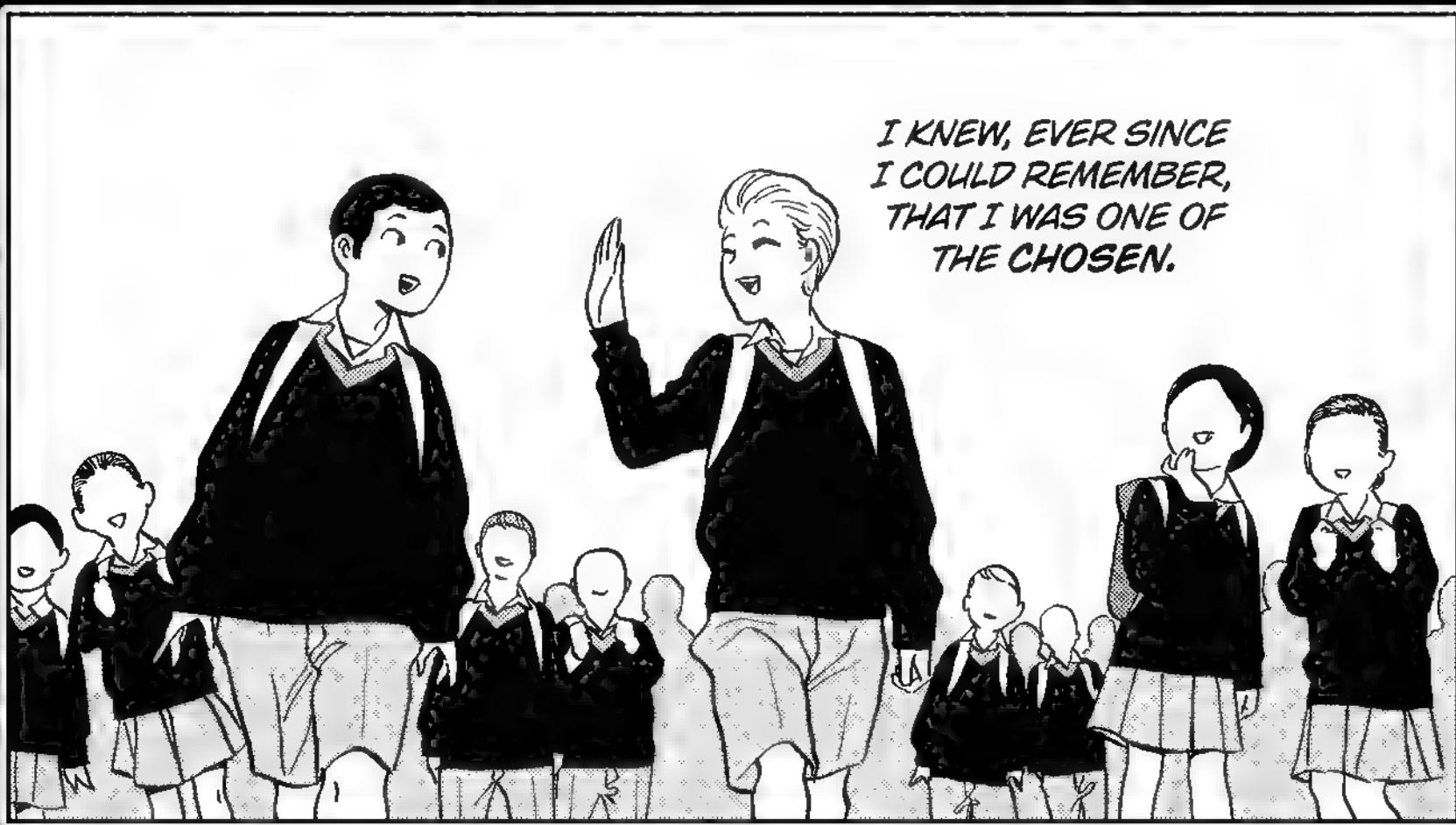
NOW JUST
ENJOY MY
STAGE!















IT IS OUR
MISSION TO LEAD
THE INCOMPETENT
PAWNS UNDER US.

IT IS THE CHOSEN'S
DUTY TO SHEPHERD
THE WEAK EFFECTIVELY.

LEAVING THEM TO THEIR OWN
DEVICES IS INEFFICIENT. WE
WOULD LOSE OUR CHANCE
AT SEIZING THE GREATEST
ADVANTAGE AND CREATE A
DEVASTATING LOSS.



*This will
go down
in Keiryo
High School
history!*

ANNUAL KEIRYO HIGH SC BOND × OUR FUTURE = OUR YOU

CLAP CLAP CLAP



*This
has been
the most
successful
turnout
ever!*

ANNUAL KEIRYO HIGH SC
BOND × OUR FUTURE = OUR YOU



President
Maezono!

It's the
president!

THAT'S NOT
IMPORTANT
RIGHT NOW.
MAEZONO-KUN,
WHAT ABOUT
YOUR
PROMISE?

WE WERE
ABLE TO UTILIZE
THAT HEFTY SUM
TO MAKE THE
CULTURE FESTIVAL
A GRAND
SUCCESS.

PRINCIPAL...
THANK YOU
VERY MUCH
FOR GIVING US
THE HIGHEST
BUDGET IN
THE SCHOOL'S
HISTORY.

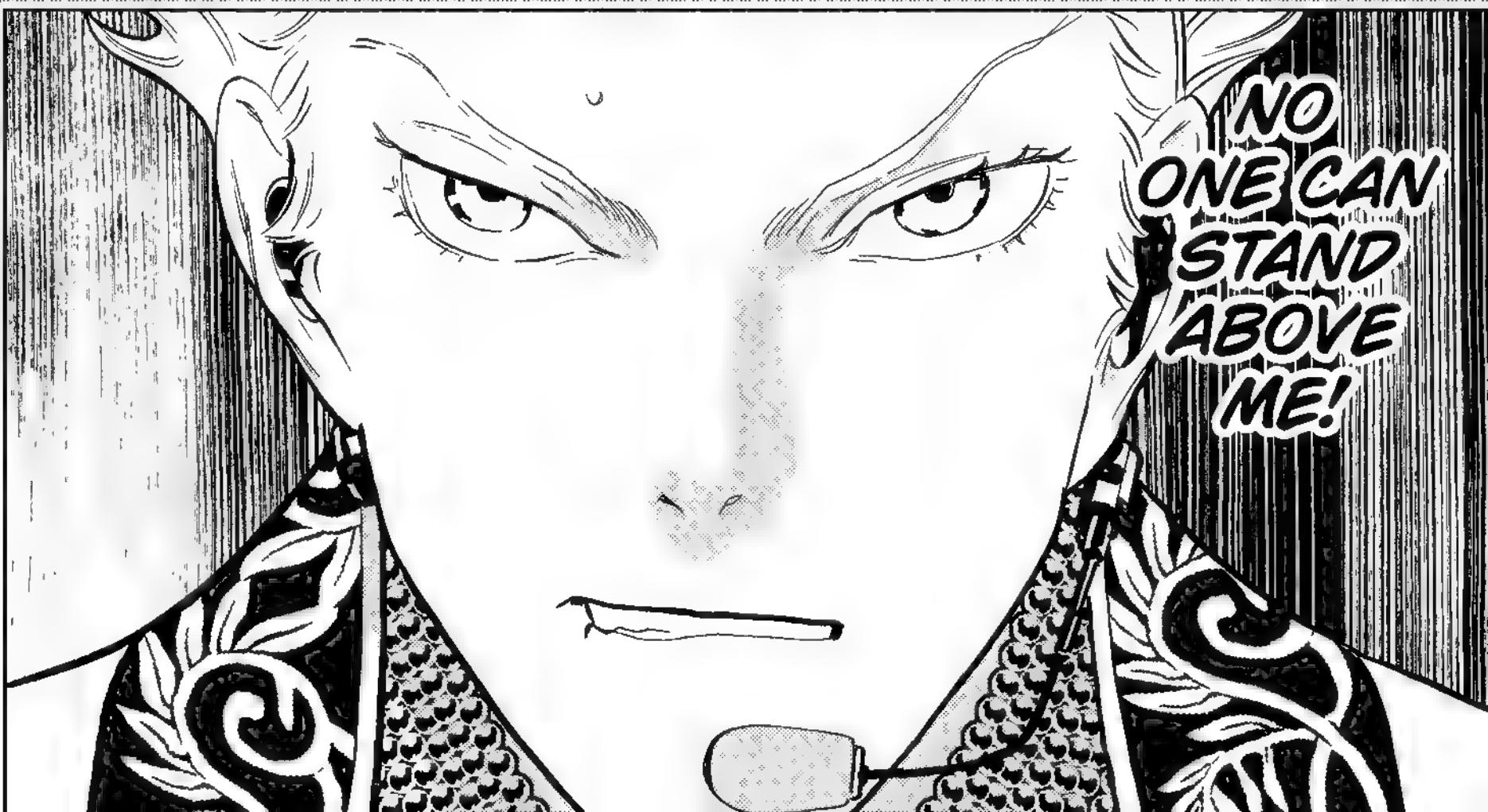
OH,
DON'T WORRY.
I'LL KEEP YOUR
EMBEZZLEMENT
FIASCO OUR
LITTLE SECRET.

FLAP

THE END
JUSTIFIES
THE MEANS.

IF I PLAY MY CARDS
RIGHT, THEN MY
PAWNS WILL BOOST
ME THROUGH THE
SHORTEST ROUTE
TO SUCCESS.

PEOPLE ARE
NOTHING MORE
THAN RESOURCES
THAT I CAN PUT
INTO PLAY AND
UTILIZE.



HURRY!

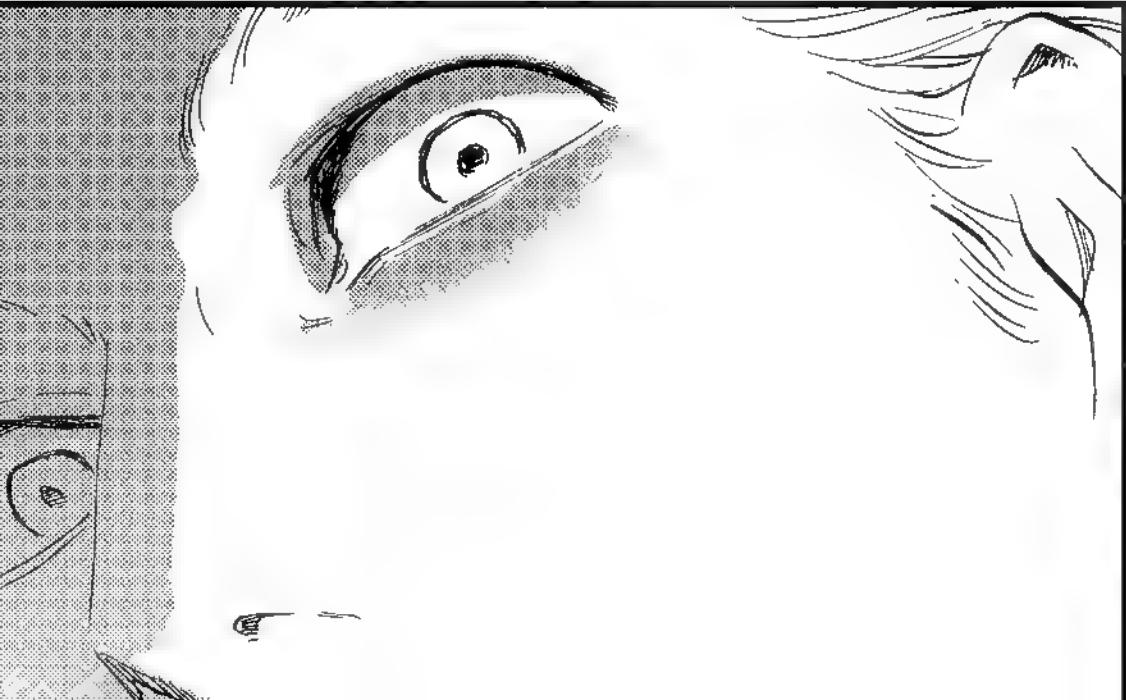
CHANGE
THE SET
LIST. WE'RE
ANNOUNCING
MY NEW
SONG!

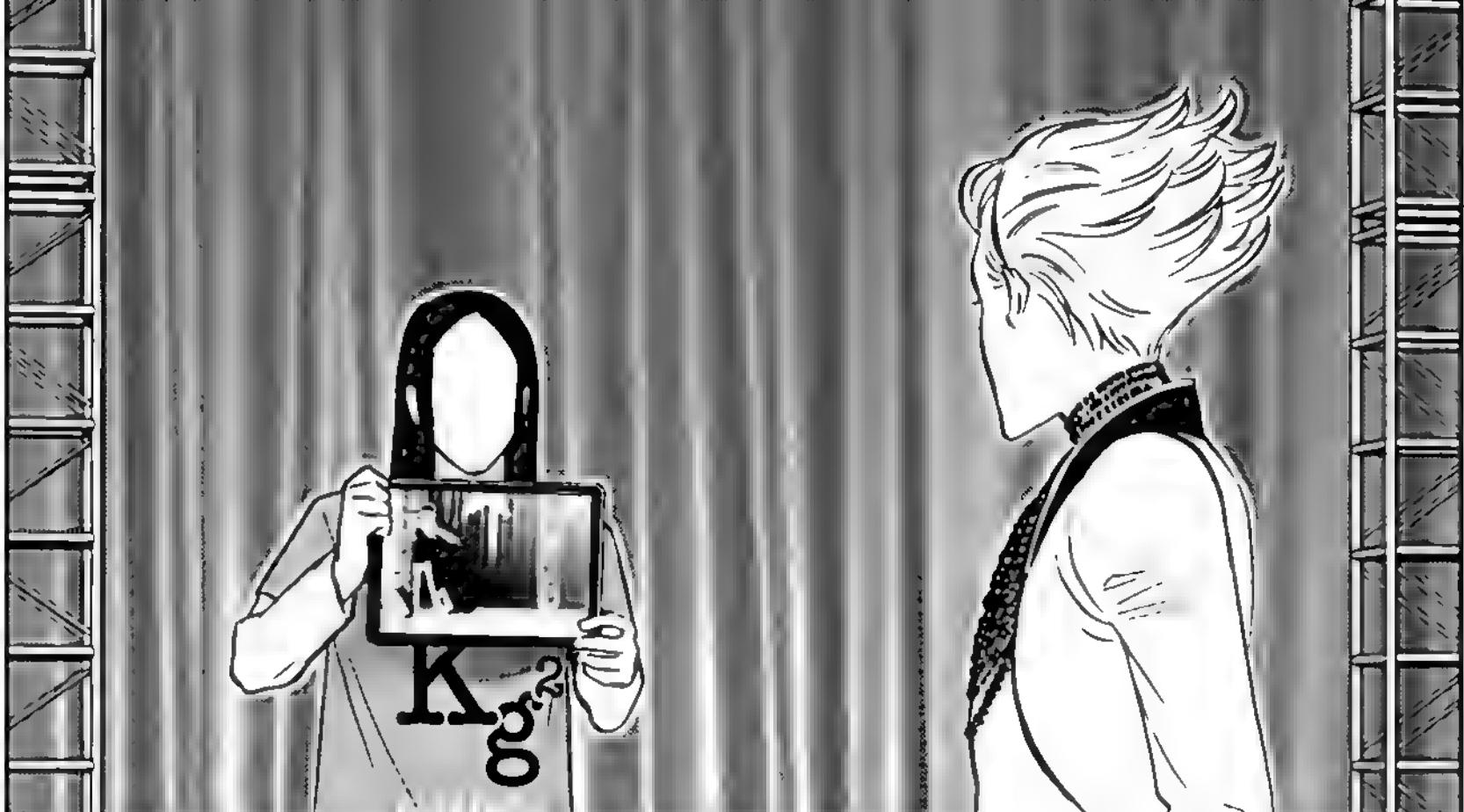
CONTACT
KONDO
TO TELL
MARIA TO
WATCH
THE NEW
PERFOR-
MANCE!

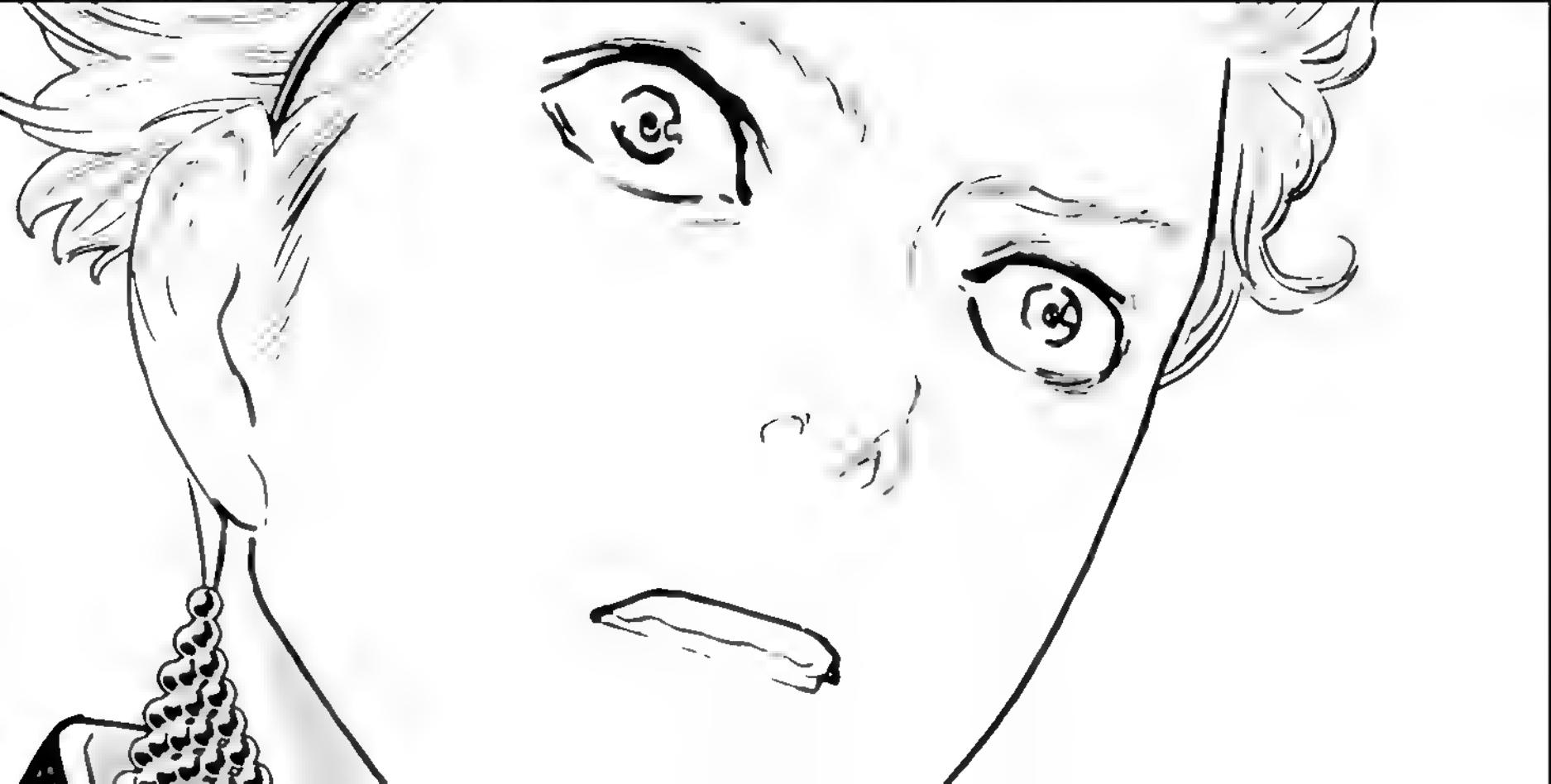
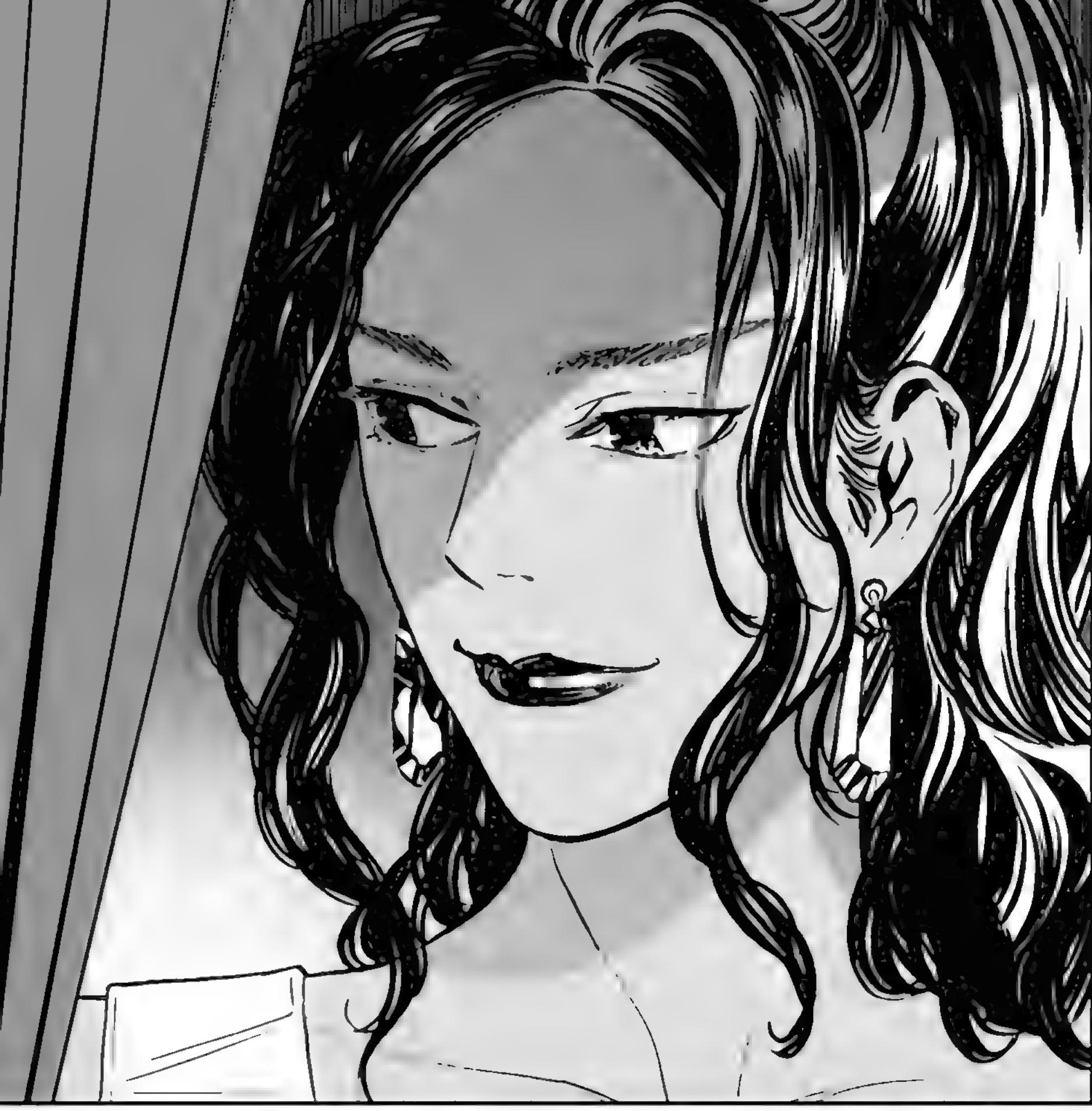
KEIJI-SAN,
LOOK...

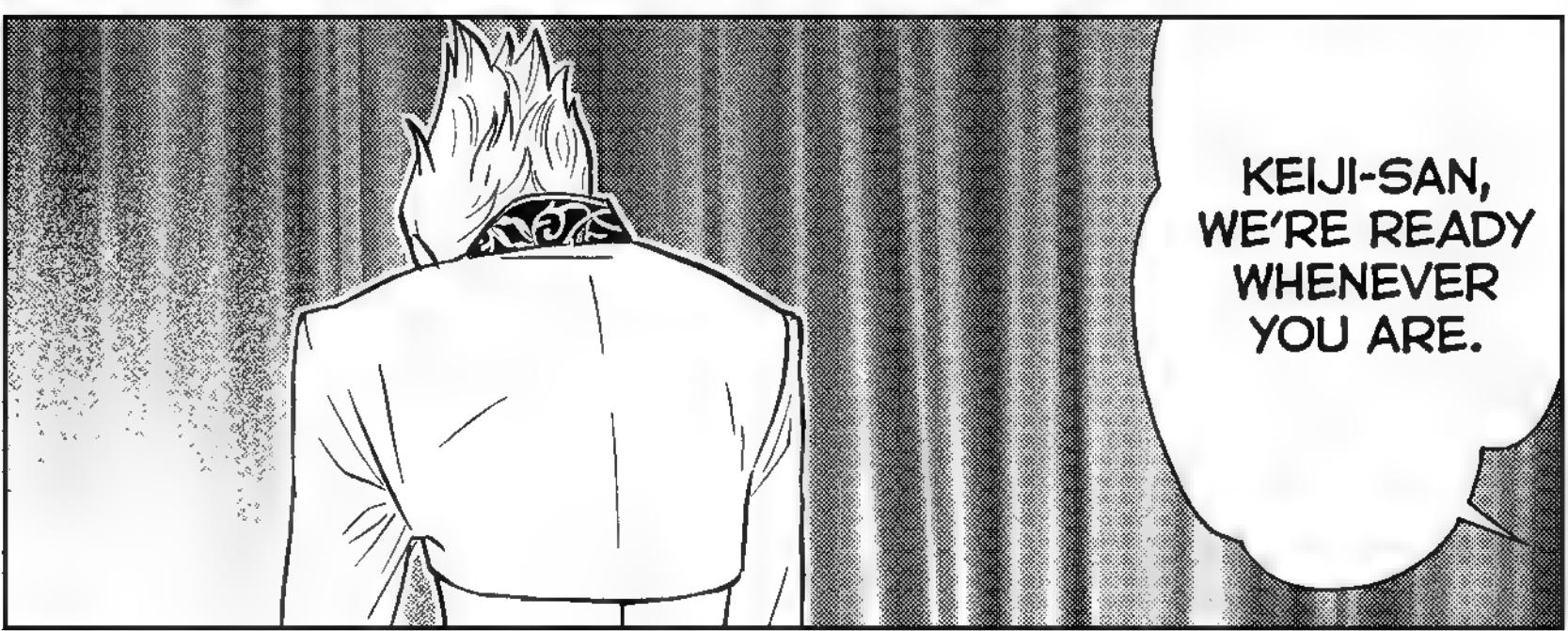
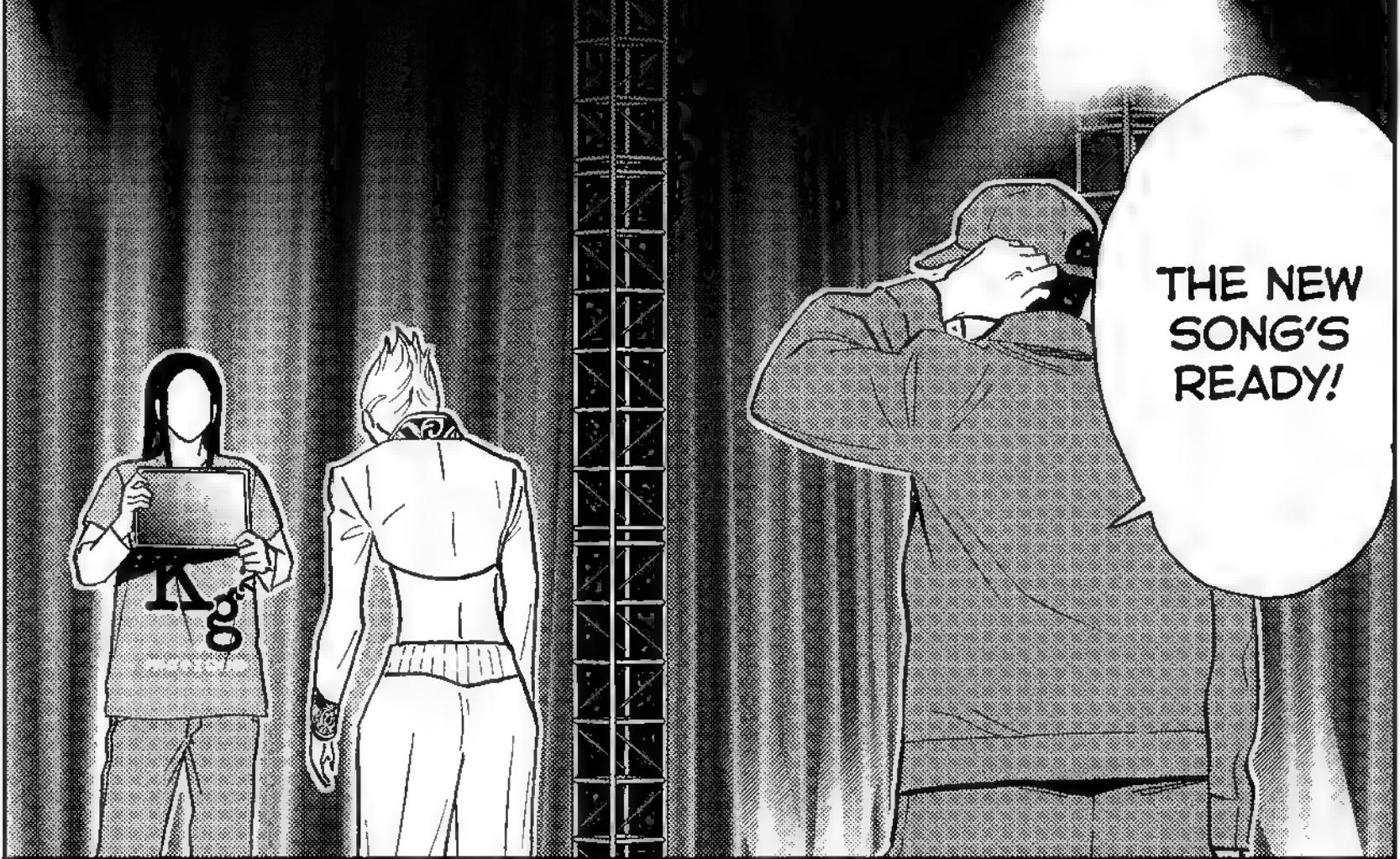
TOP ARTISTS LIKE
TO PUT ON AIRS,
BUT ALL I GOTTA
DO IS PUT ON A
FLASHY SHOW AND
THROW MONEY
ON THEM. THEY'LL
COME FLOCKING
TO ME THEN.

I NEED
TO CALL
MARIA
HERE...









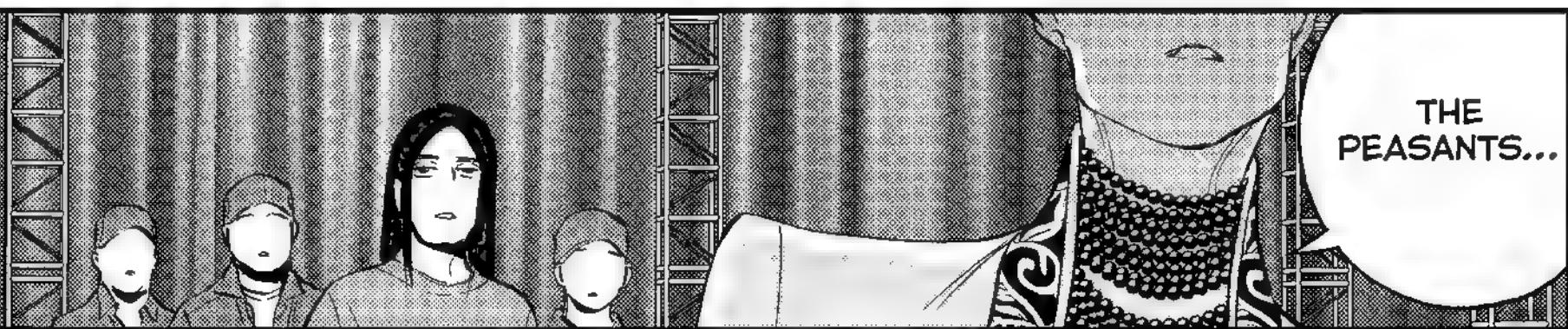


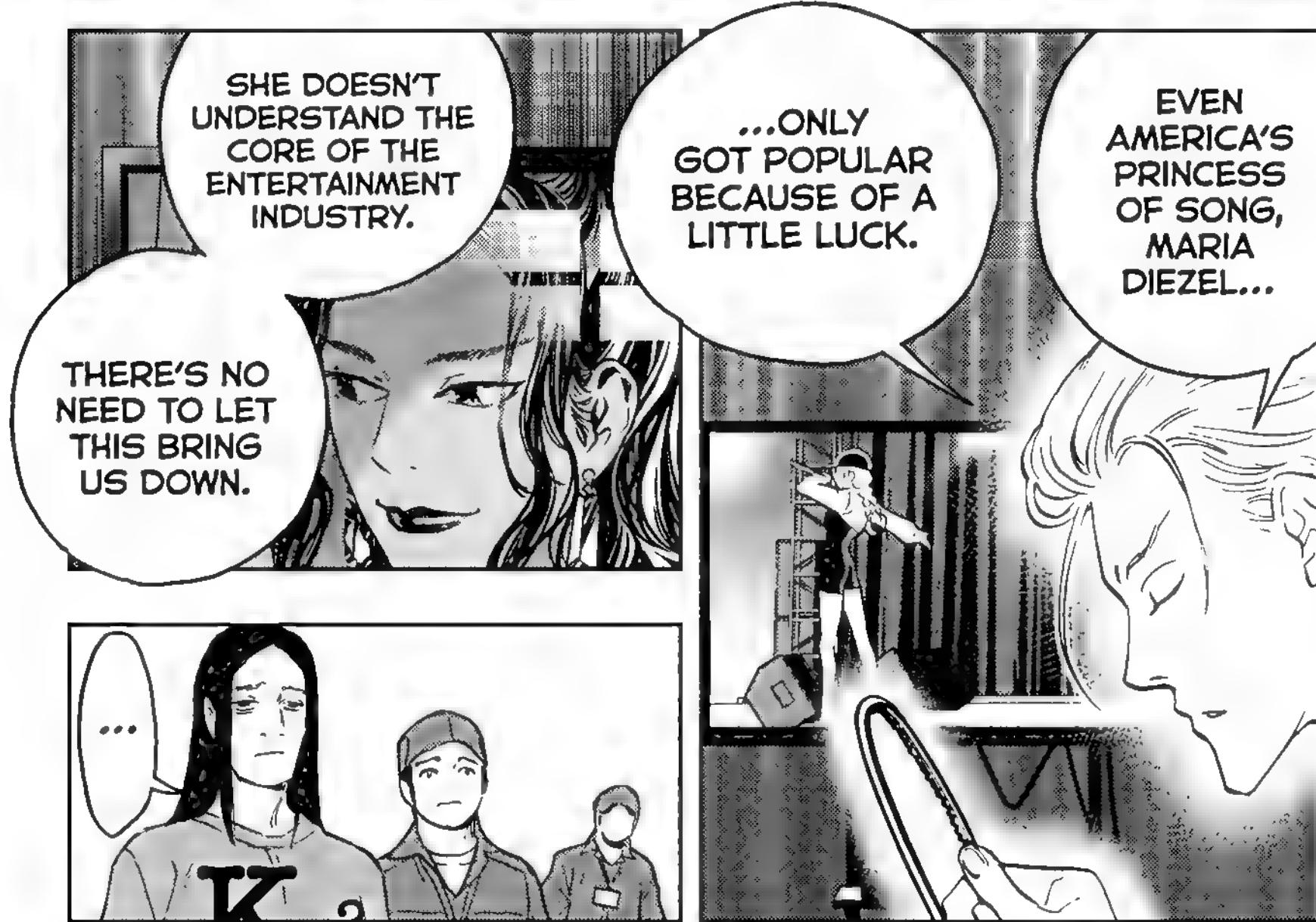
CHAPTER 103 END





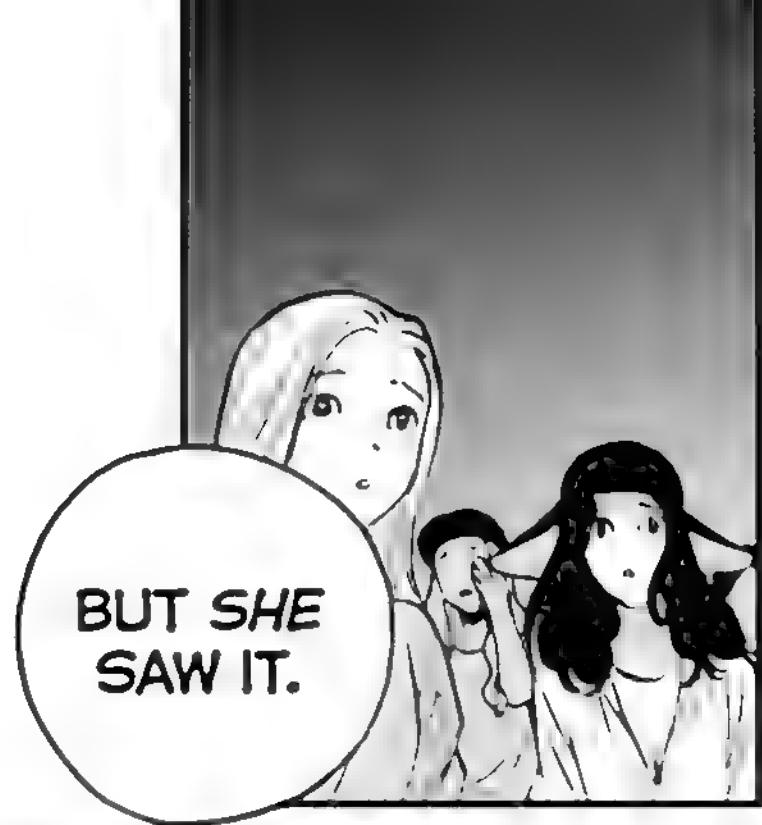


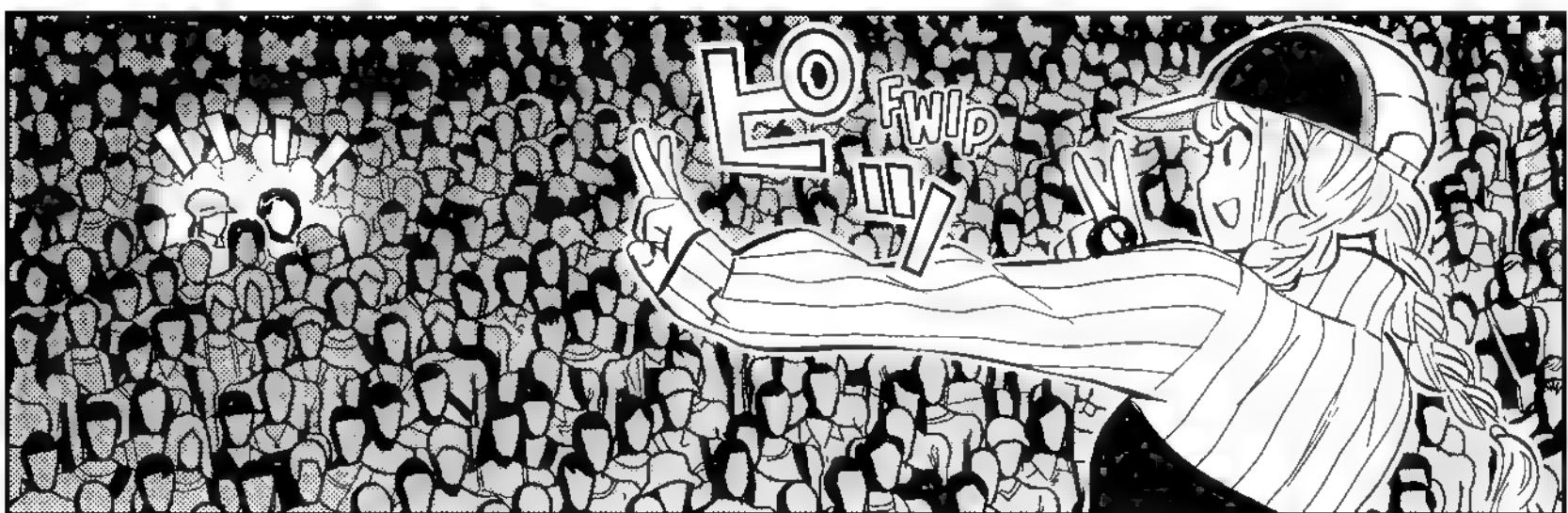
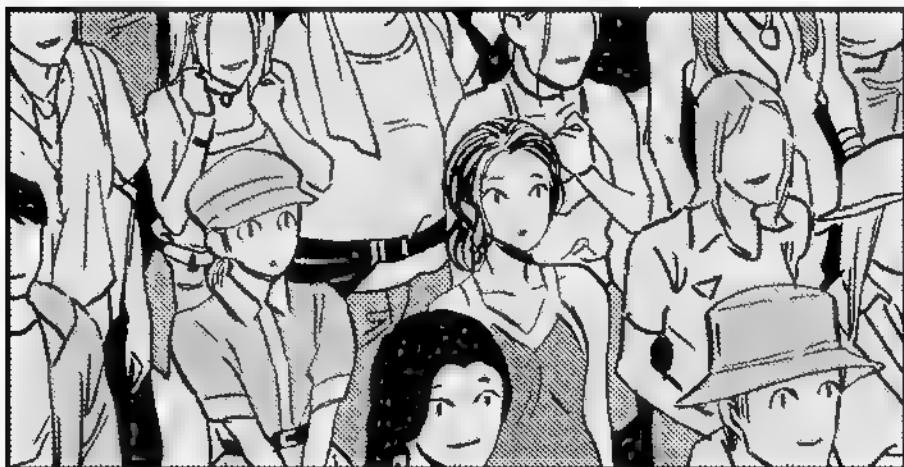
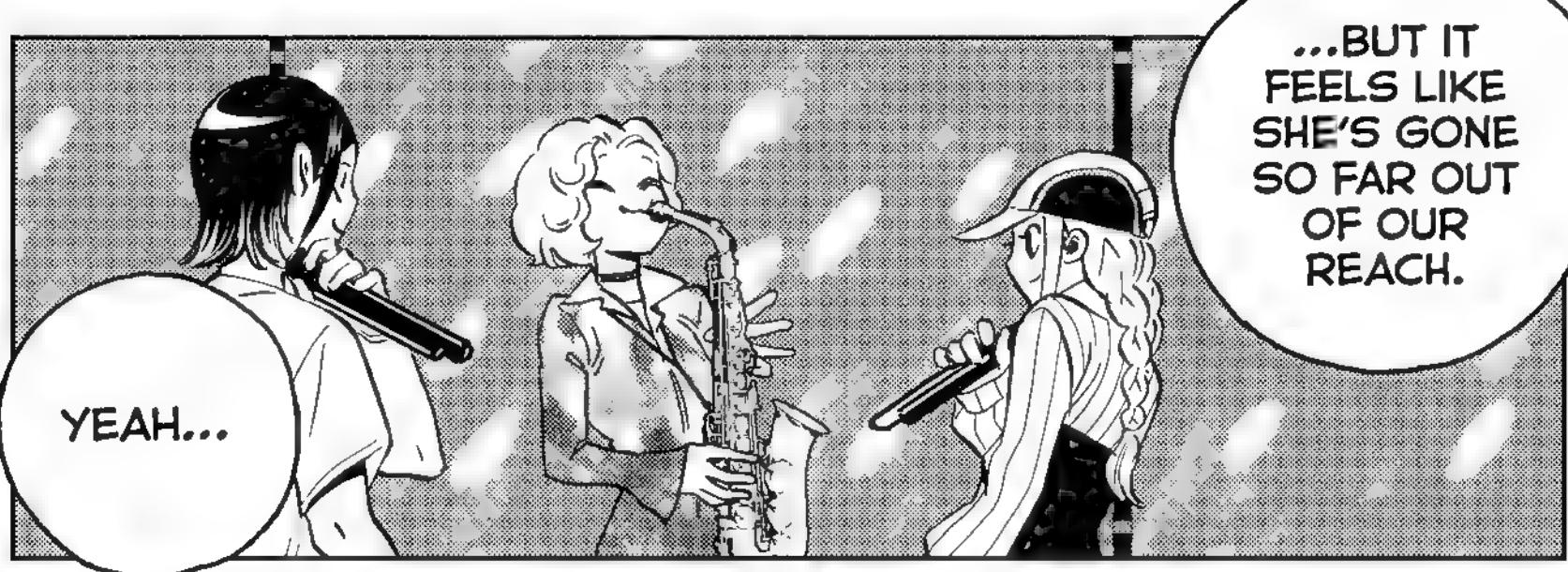






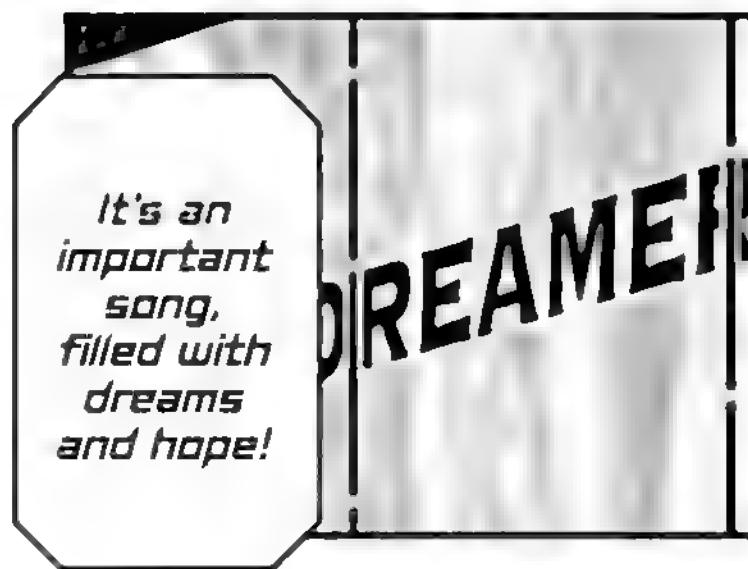








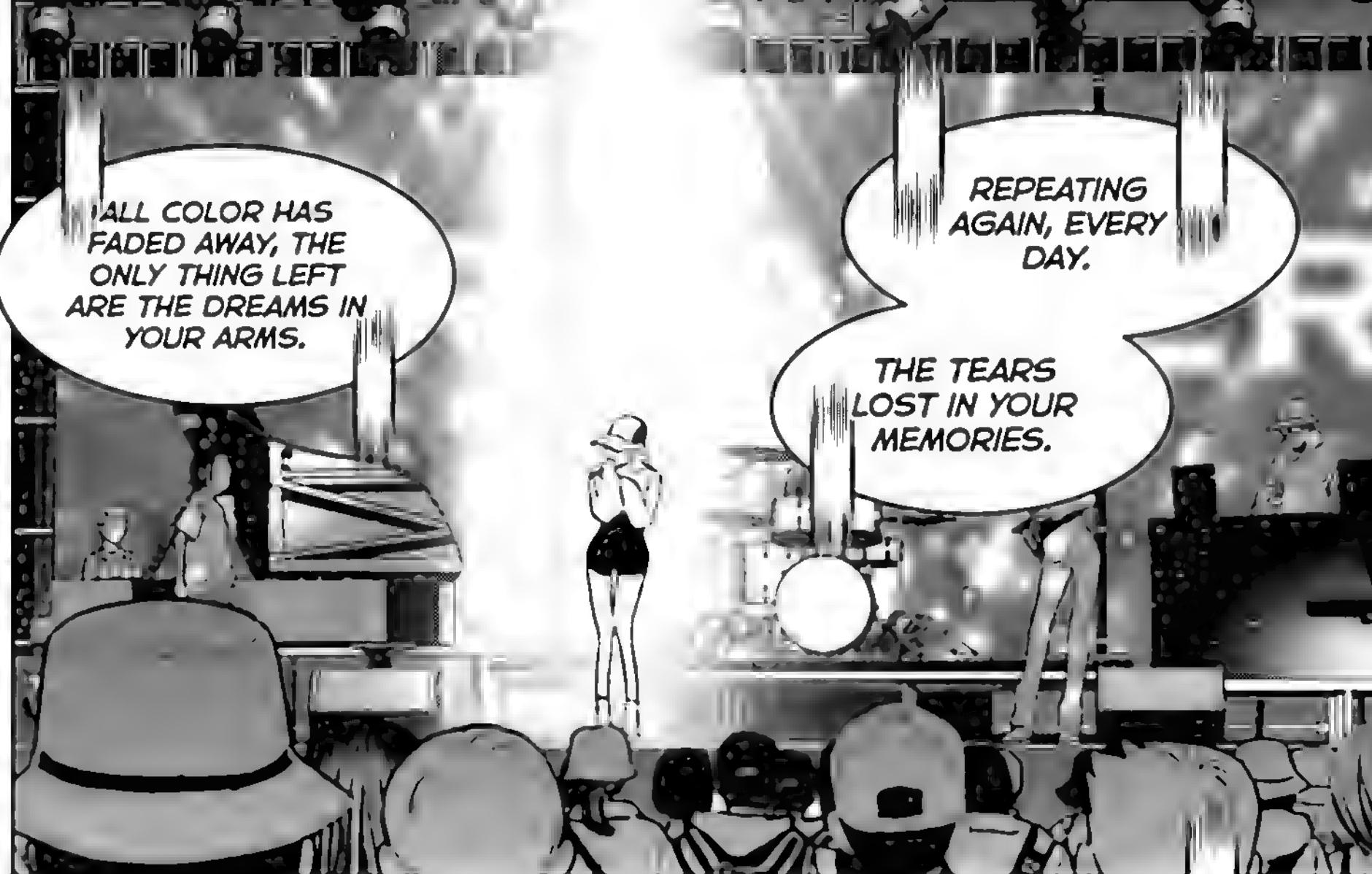
*Hey
everyone!
Thank you
for coming
to the third
stage here
today!*

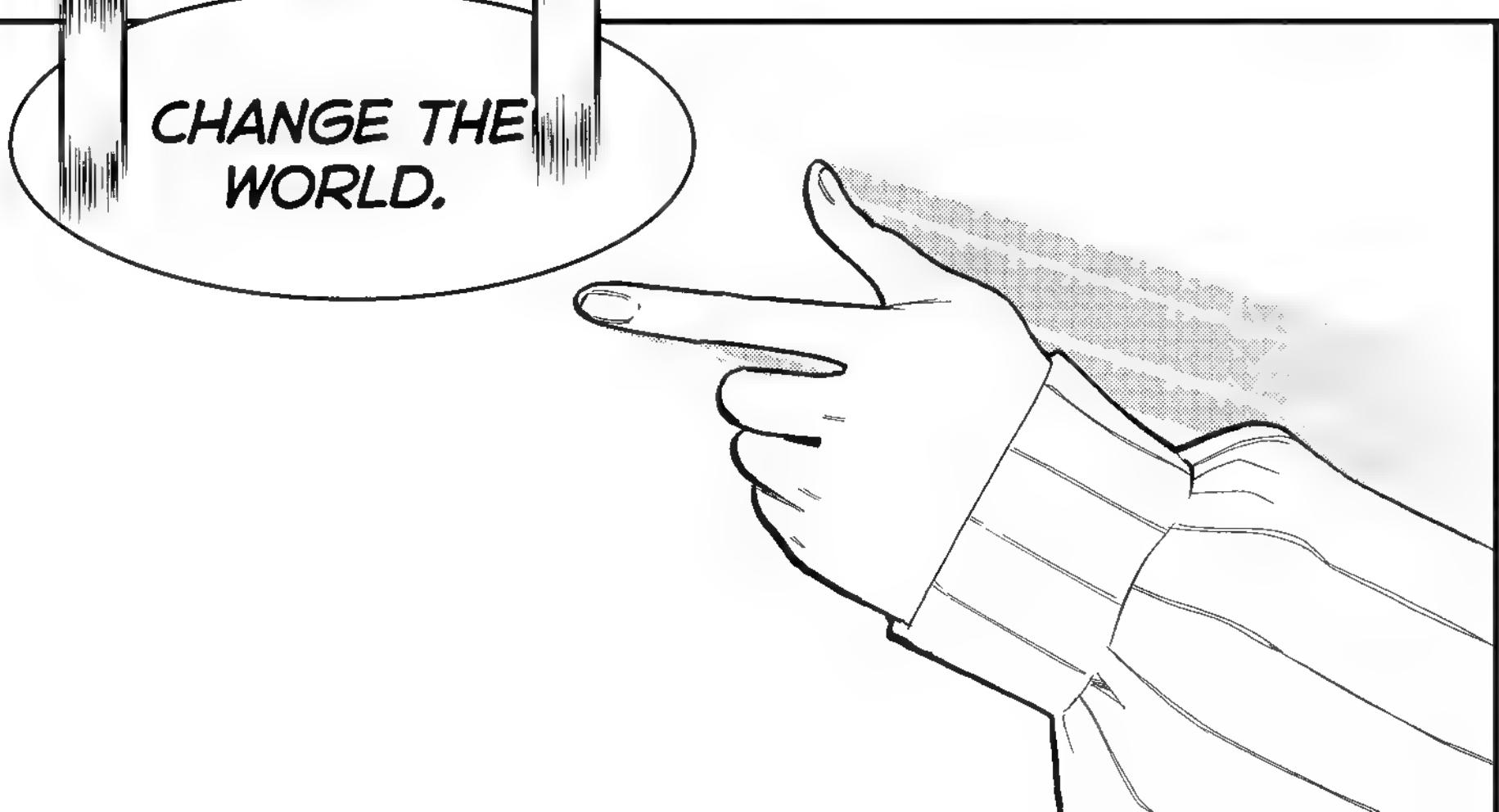
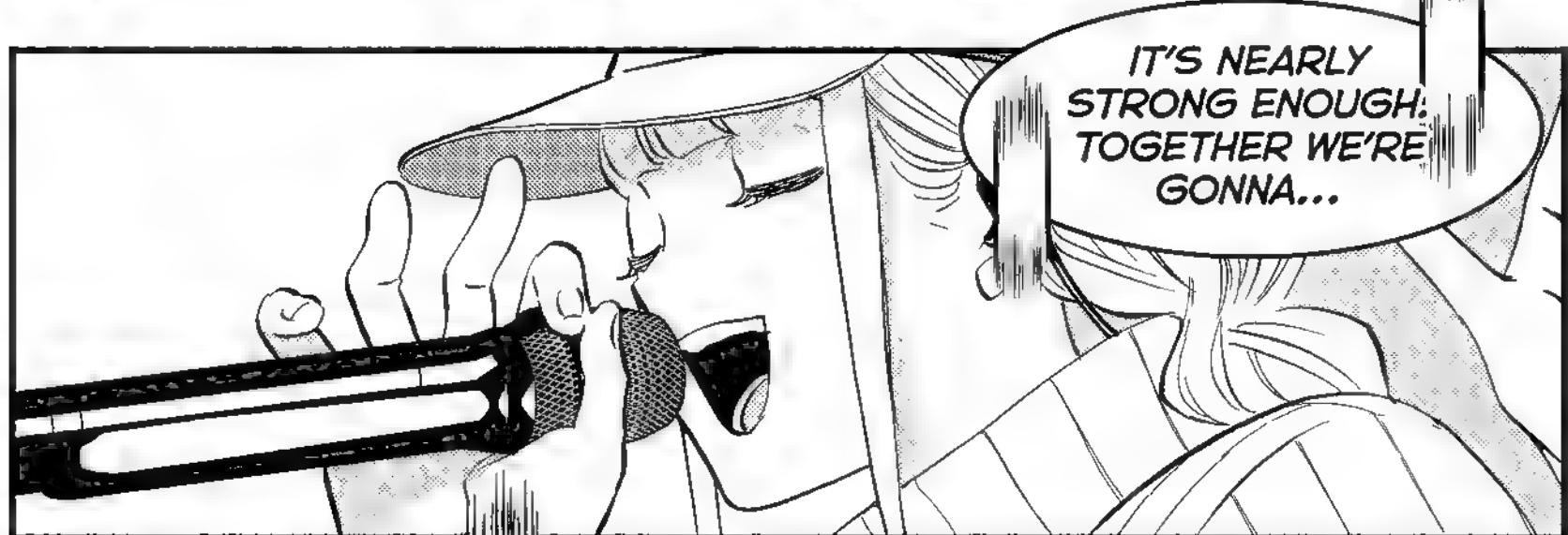
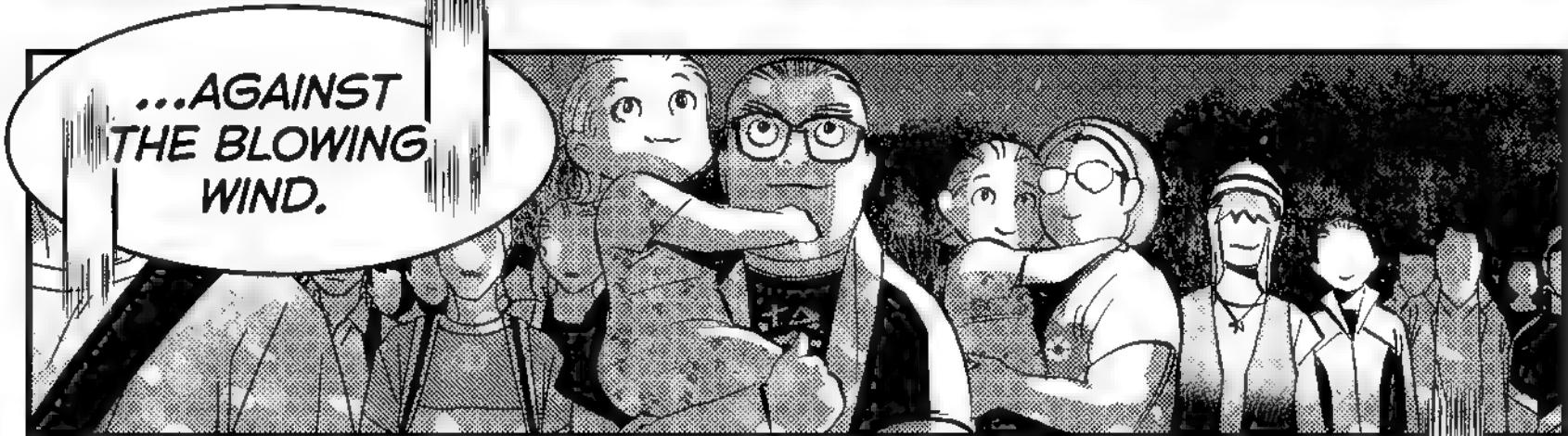


*This next
song is
a special
one! It's
the first
song I
wrote by
myself!*



*Let's
pump
it up,
guys!*





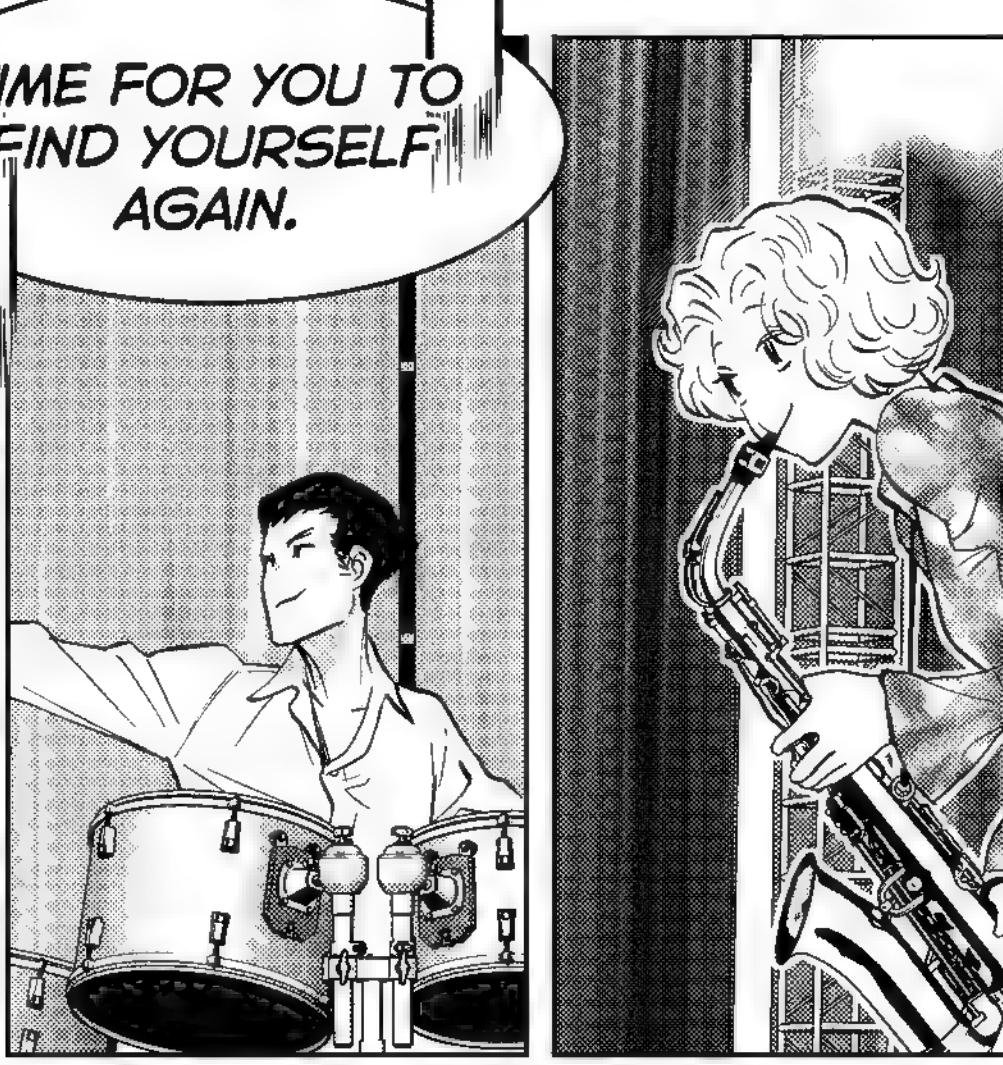




**BEAUTIFUL
DREAMER!**



**YOU'VE GOT
NOTHING YOU
CAN LOSE.**



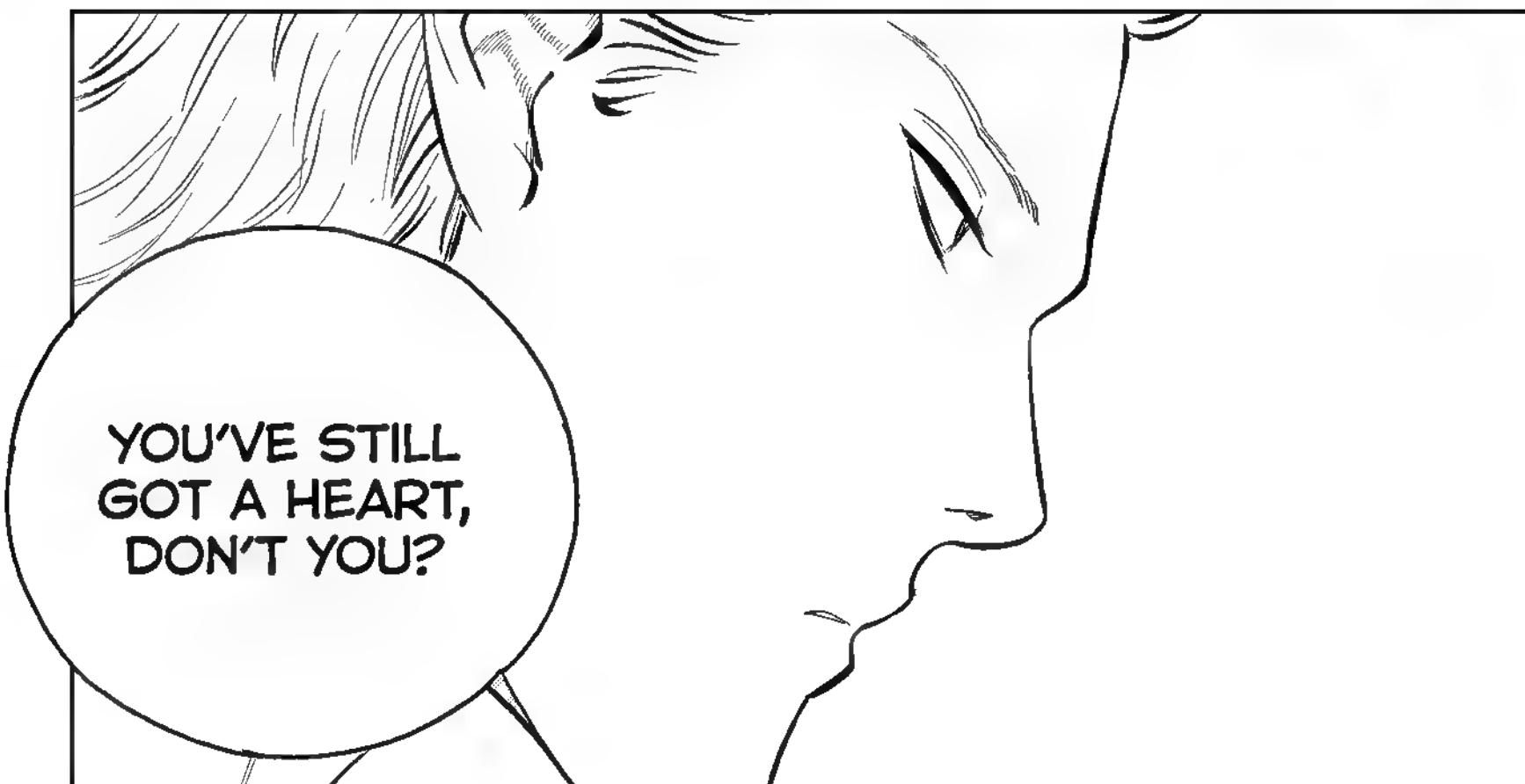
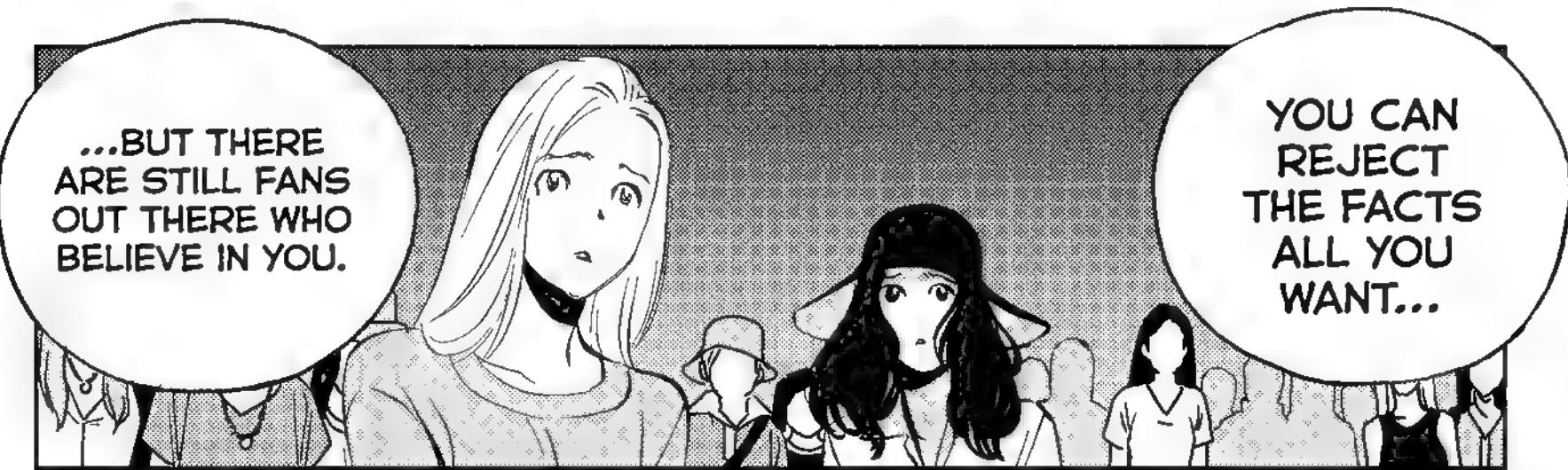
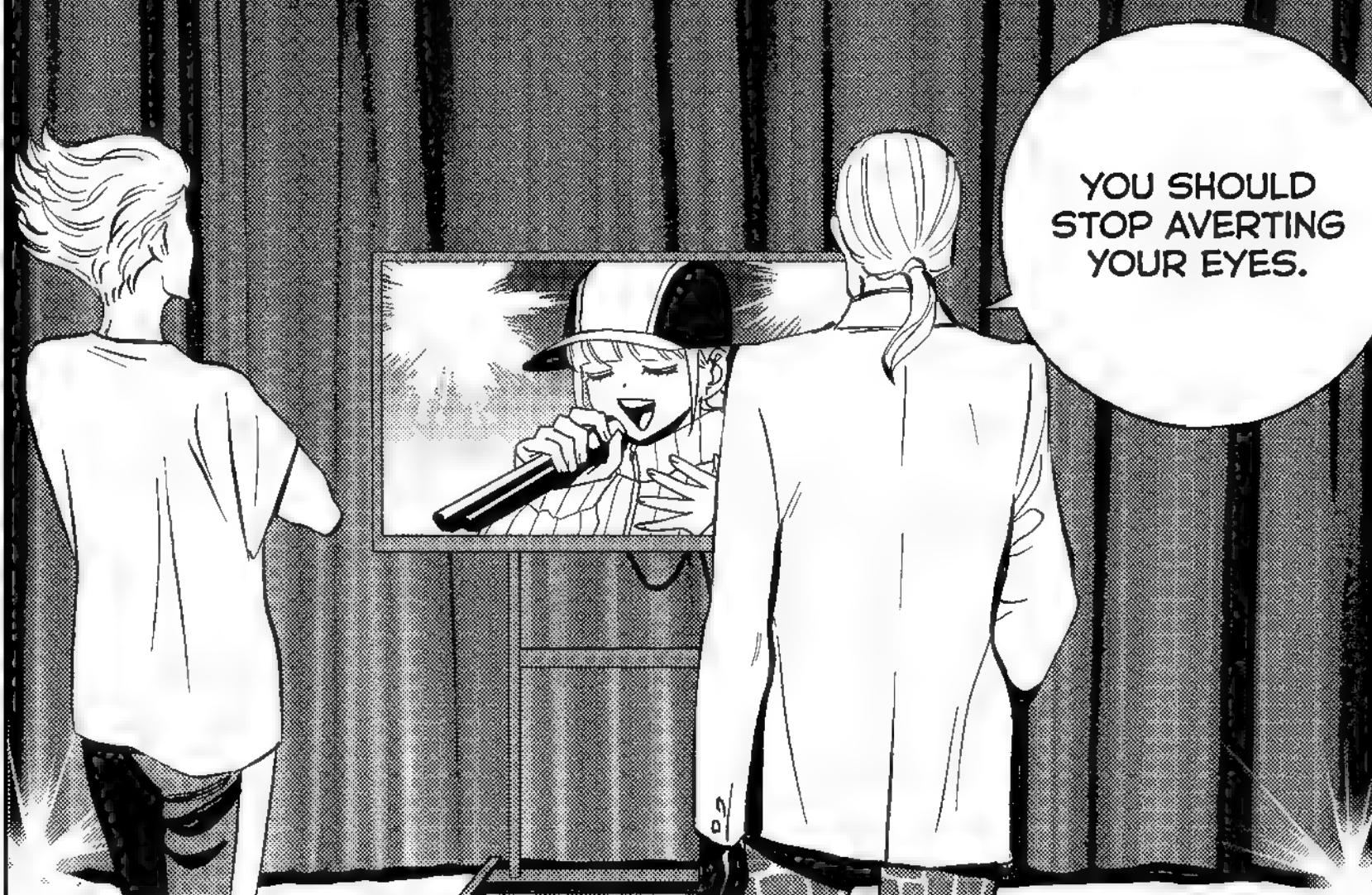
**TIME FOR YOU TO
FIND YOURSELF
AGAIN.**





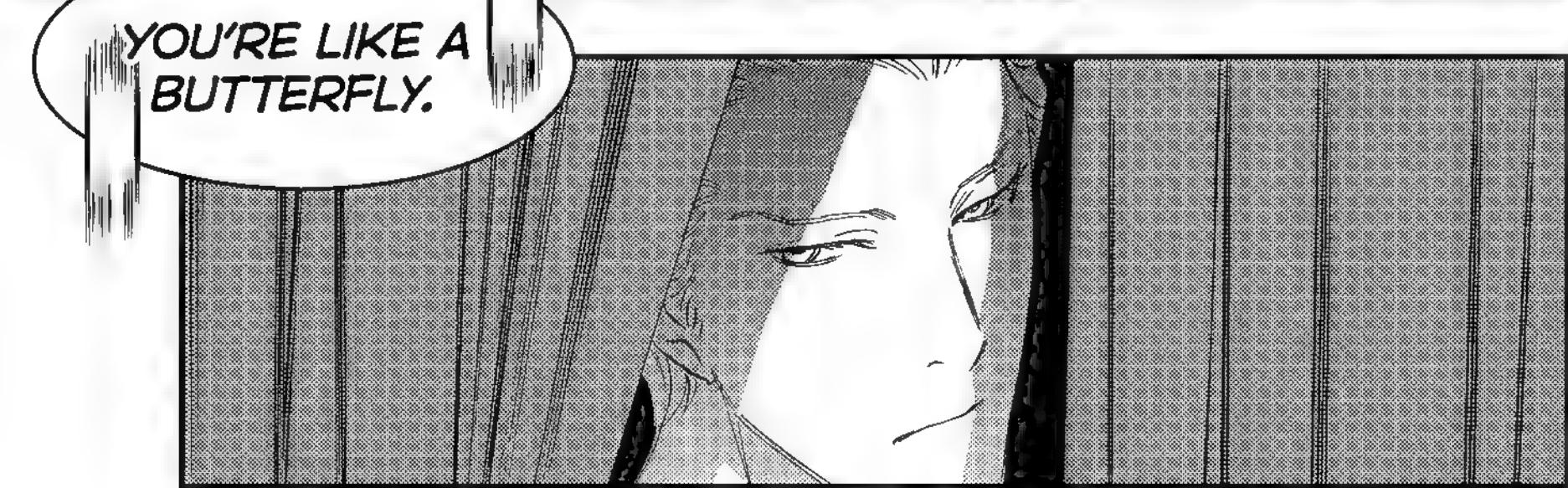
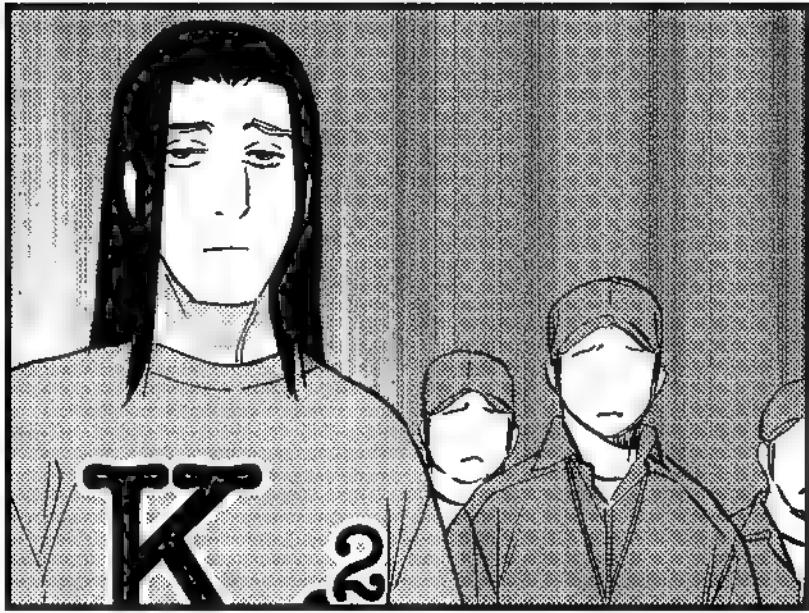
OPEN AND
SPREAD YOUR
WINGS...

...FOLLOW
YOUR HEART'S
WISH.





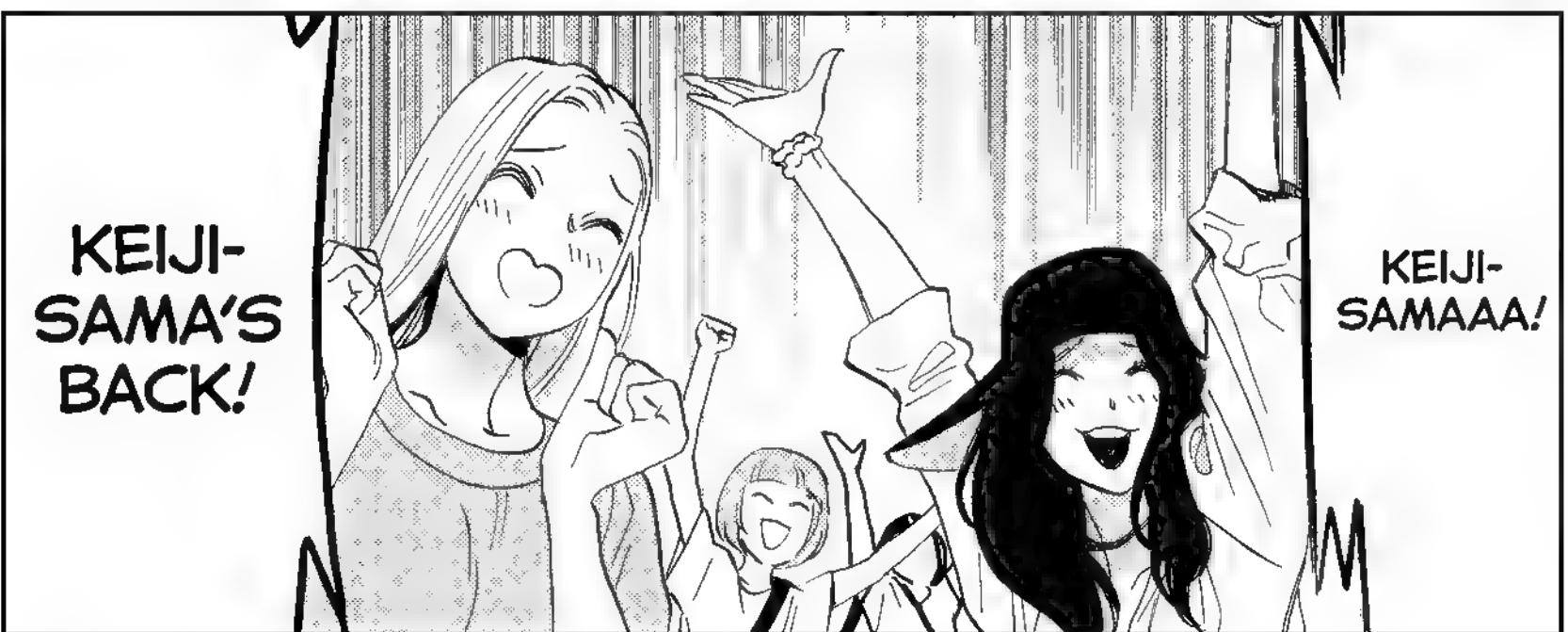
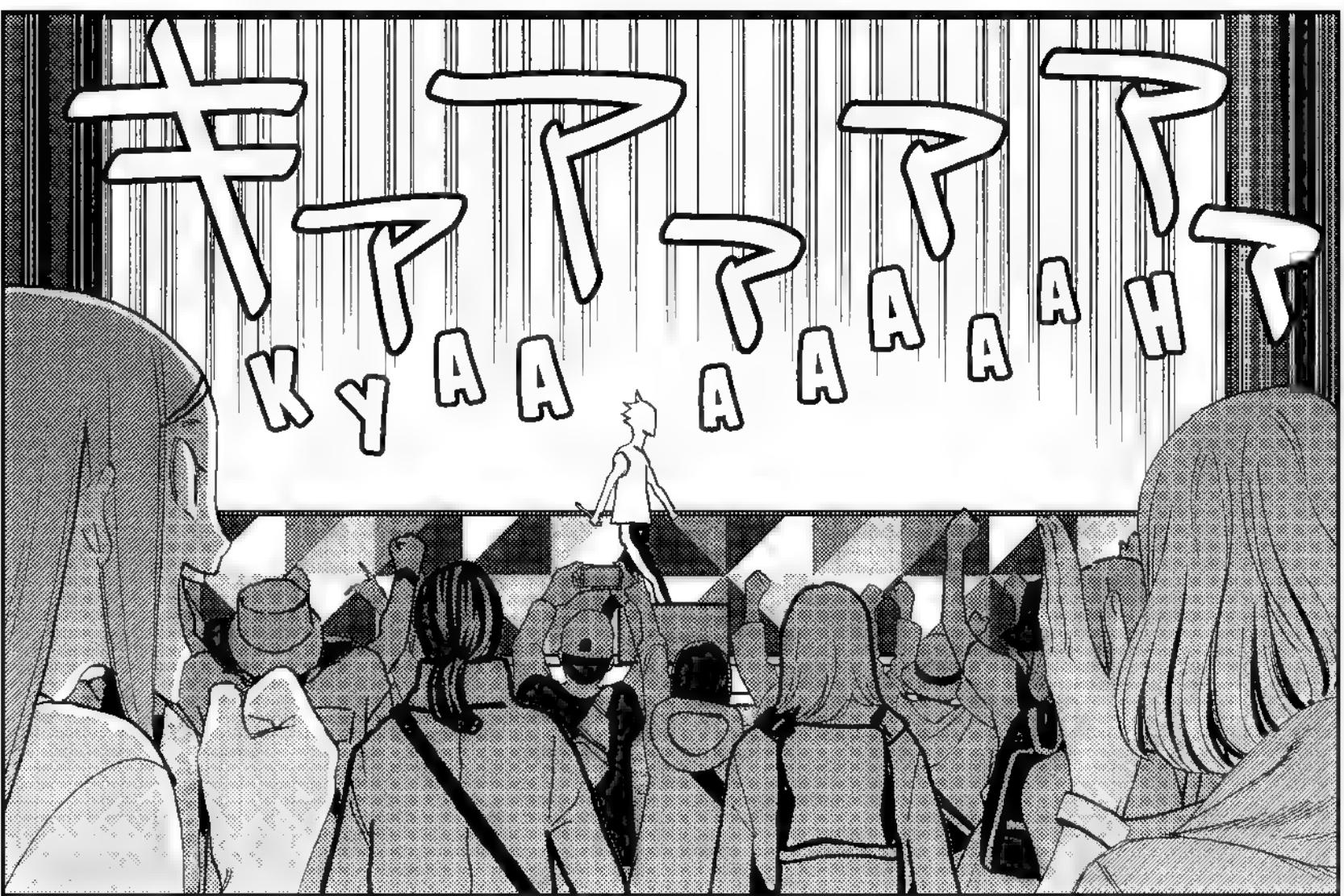
LET YOURSELF
BE REBORN.

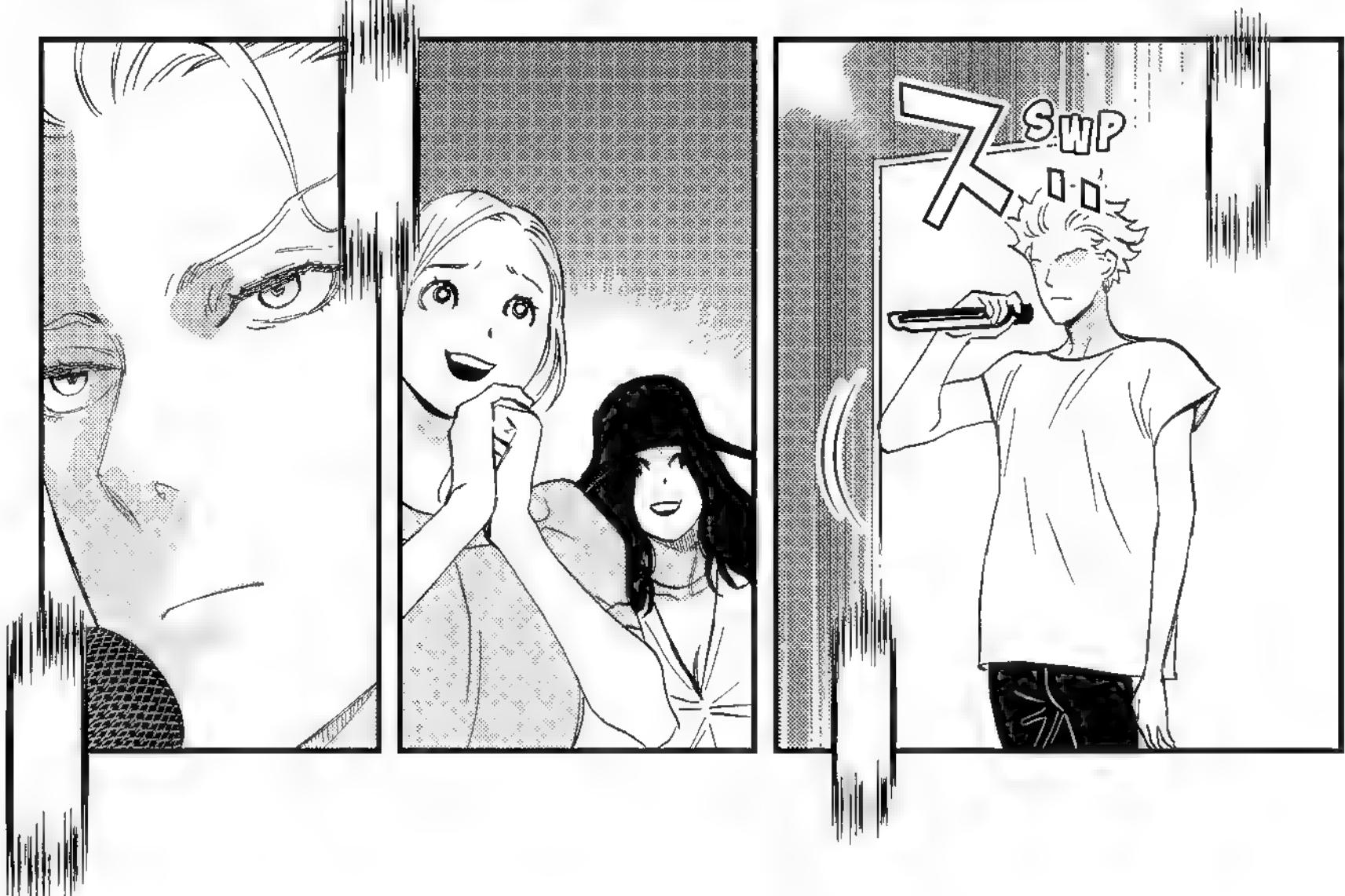
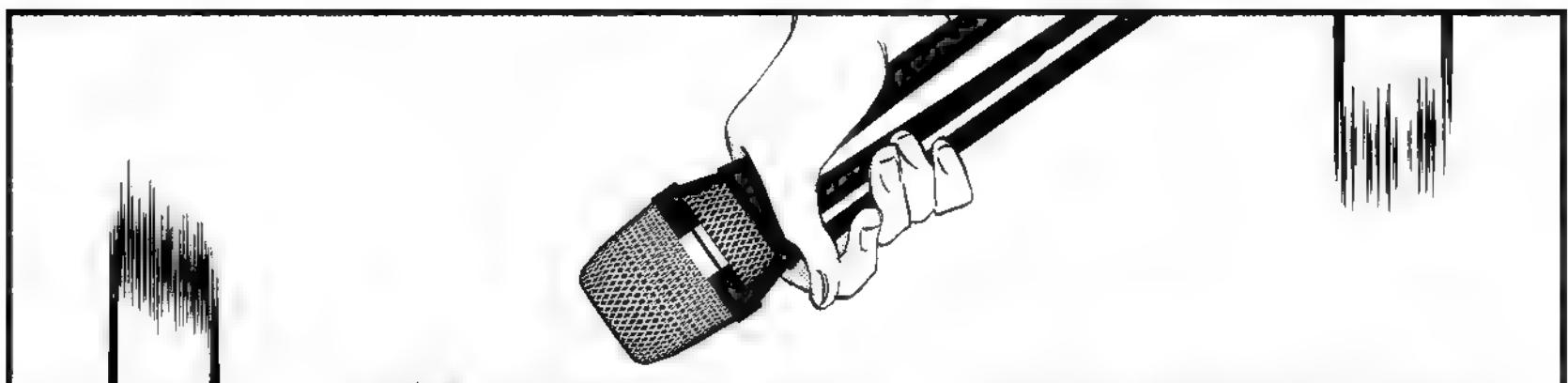


YOU'RE LIKE A
BUTTERFLY.



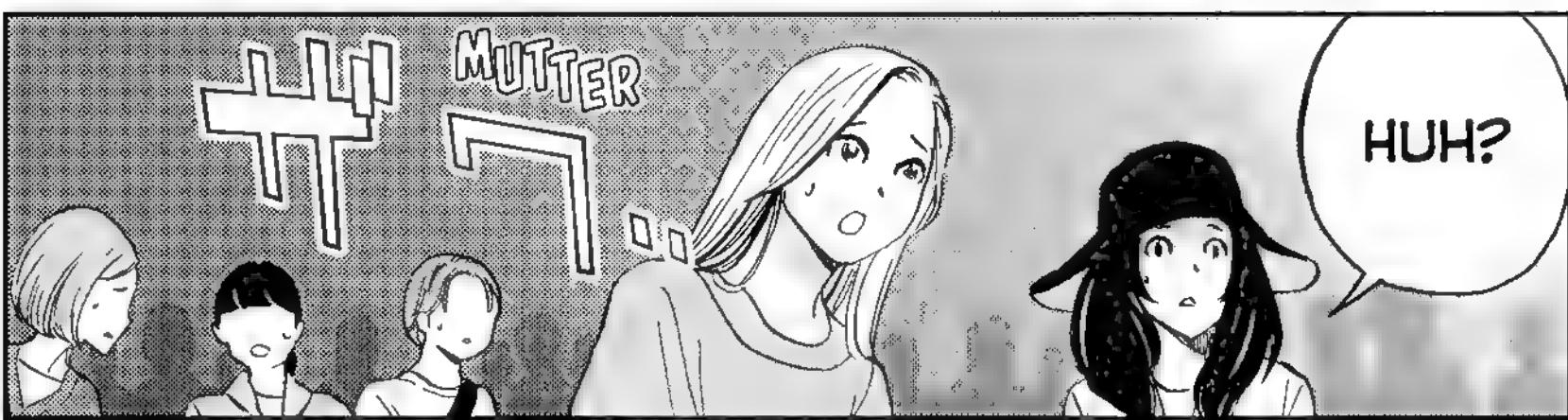








You're
all so
stupid.

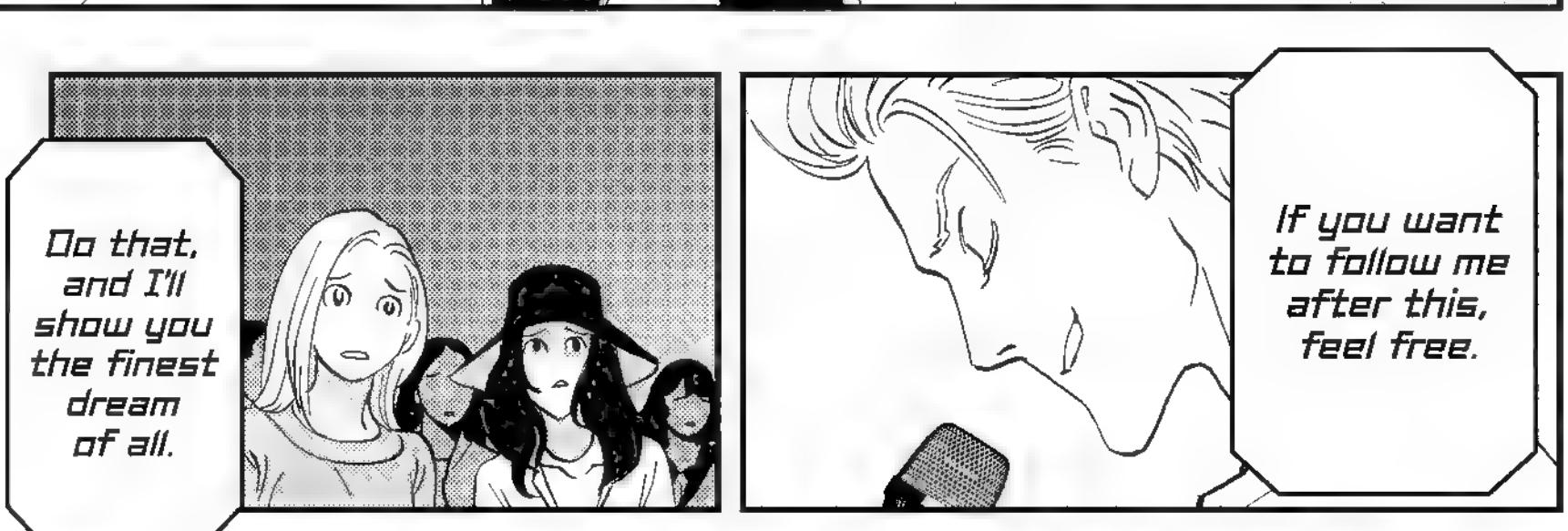




*And
certainly
not the
values
they've
been
living by!*

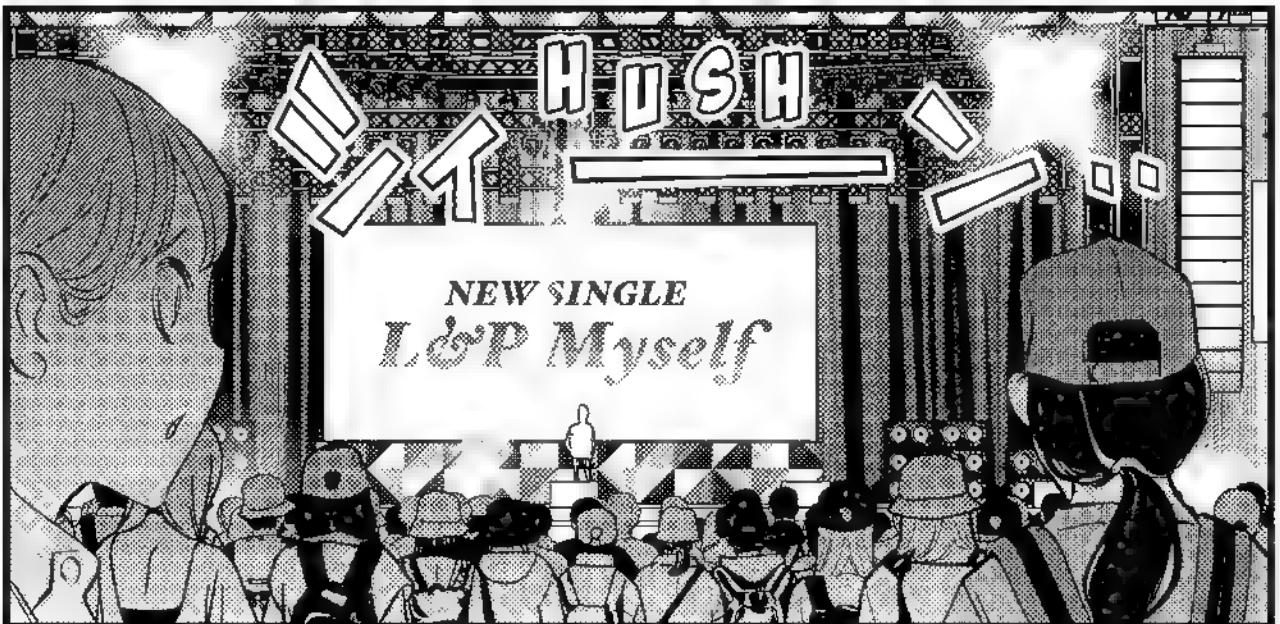
I'm me!

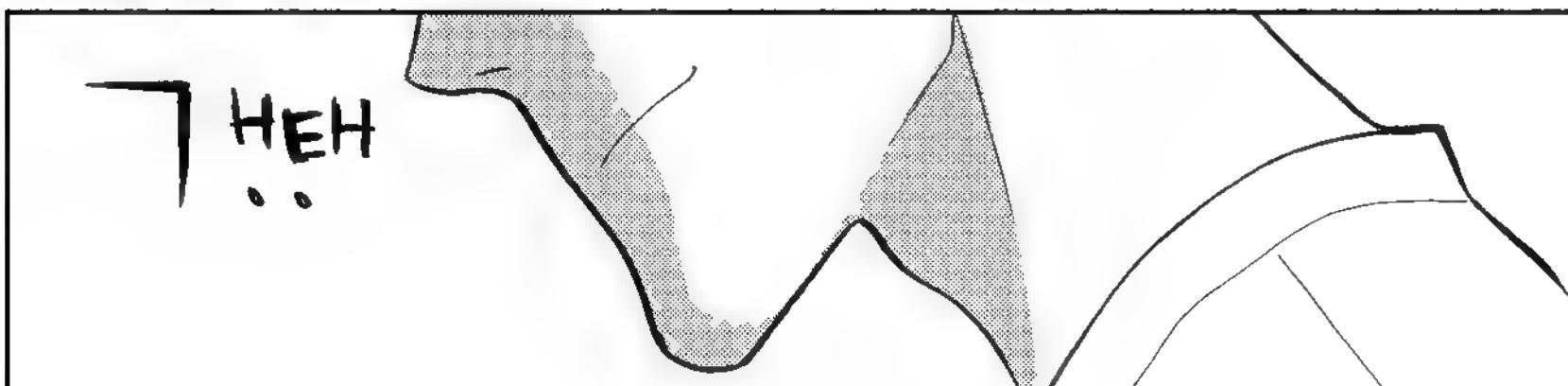
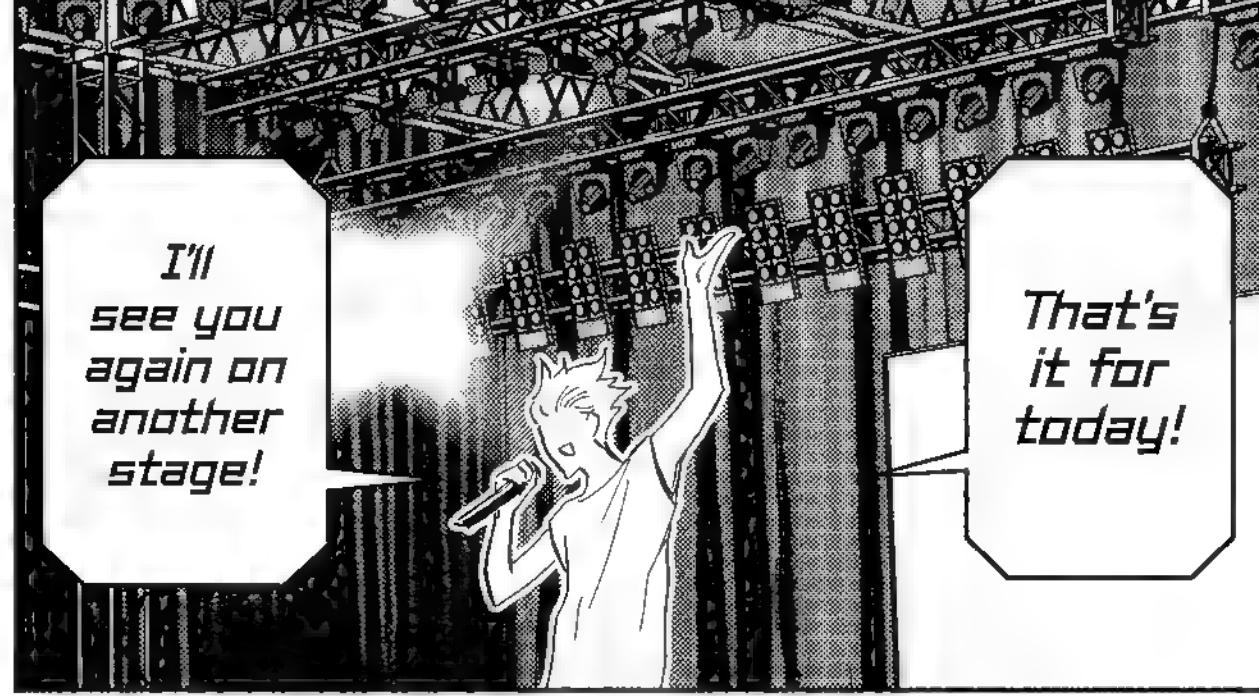
*Nobody
can fun-
damentally
change who
they are!*

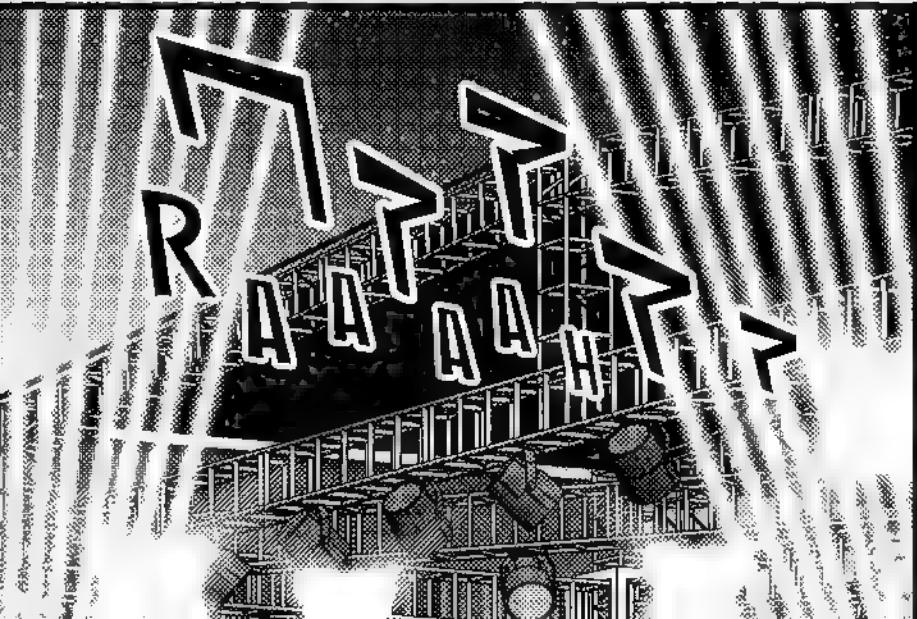
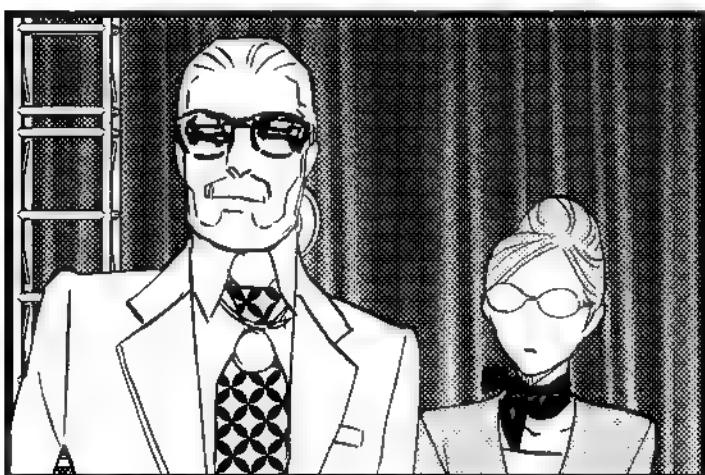


*Do that,
and I'll
show you
the finest
dream
of all.*

*If you want
to follow me
after this,
feel free.*





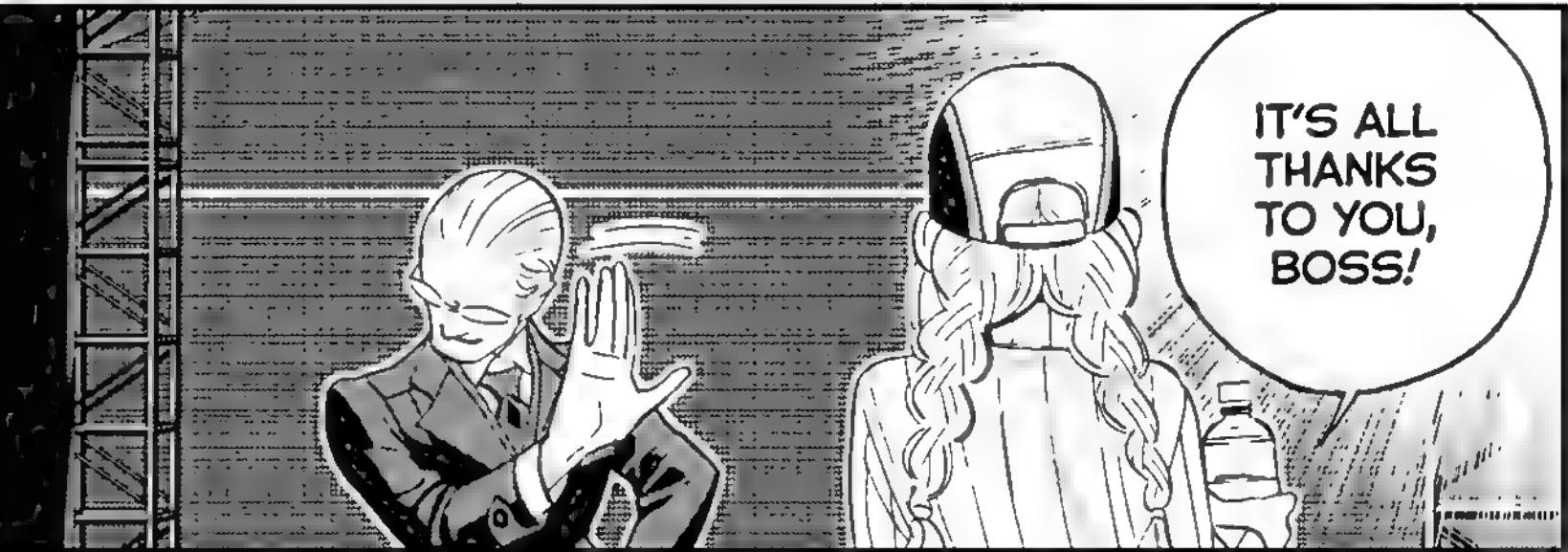




YOU'VE
BECOME
SO BIG,
EIKO!

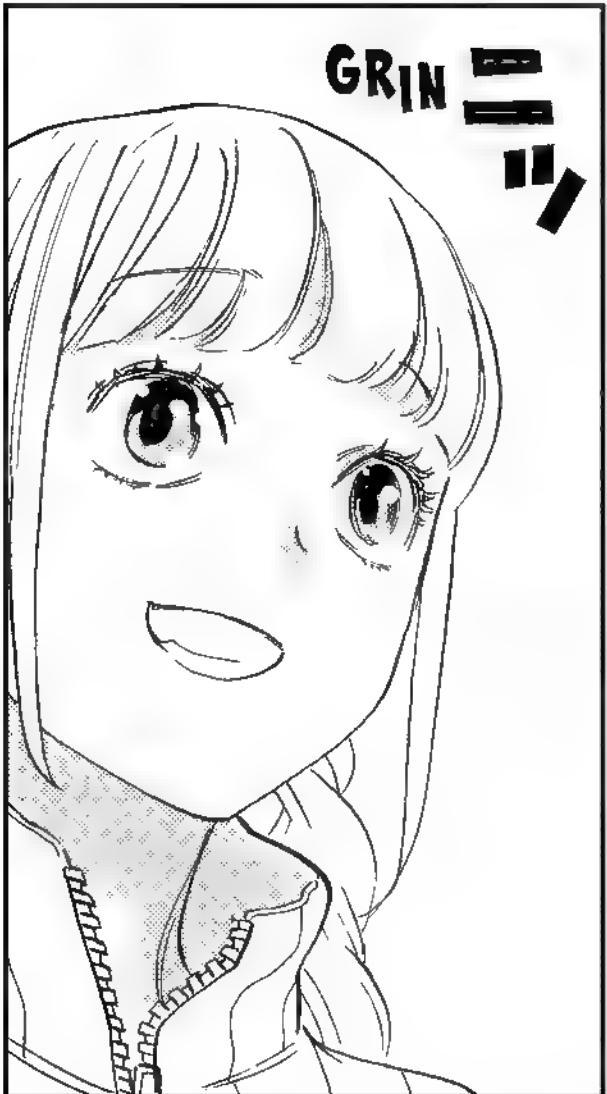
I'LL
ALWAYS
BE YOUR
BIGGEST
FANS!

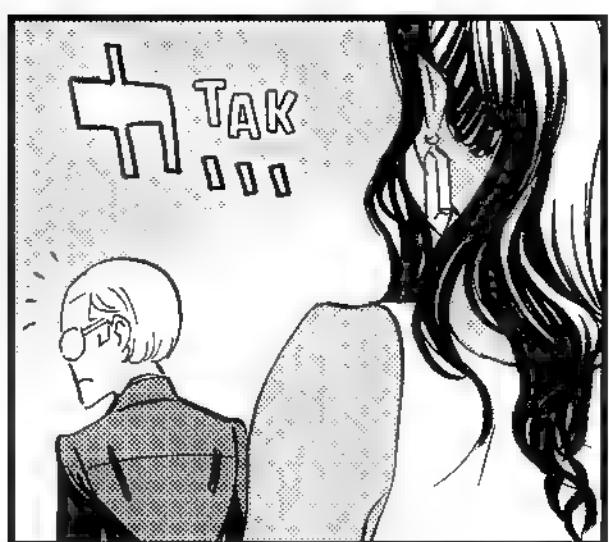
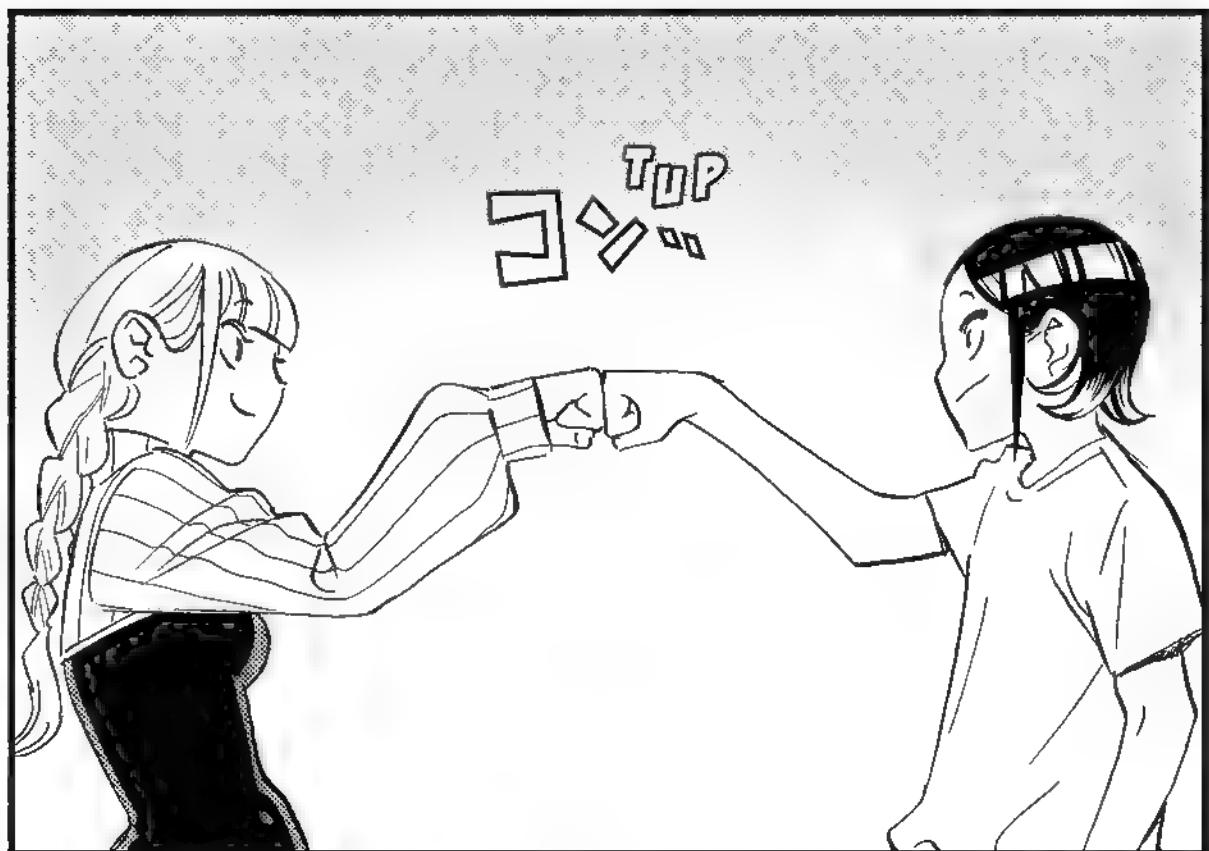
GREAT
WORK
OUT
THERE!

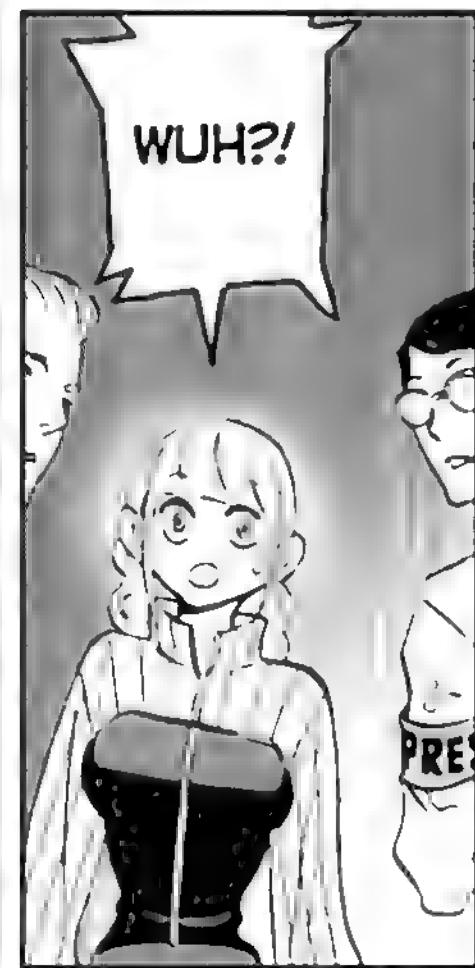
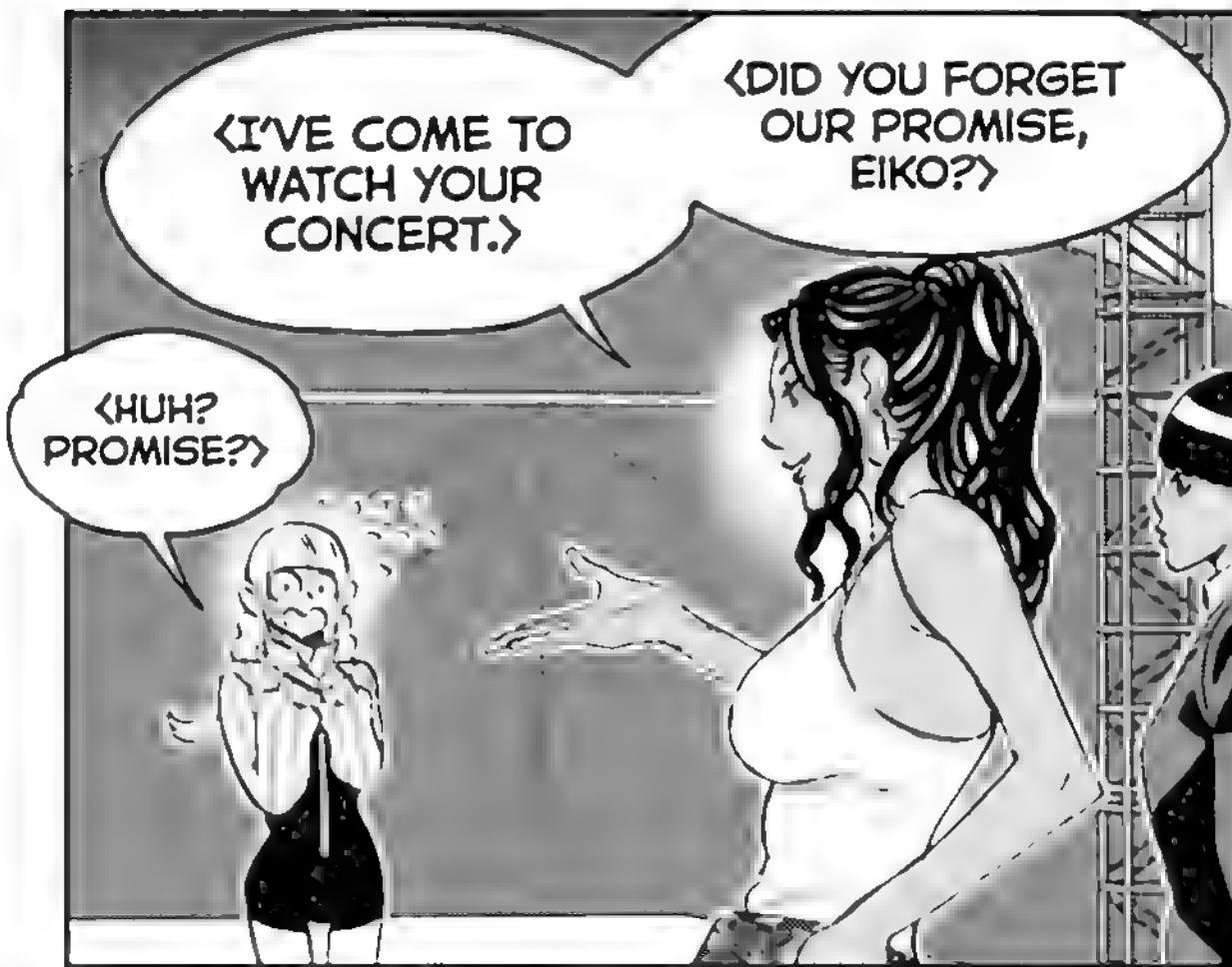


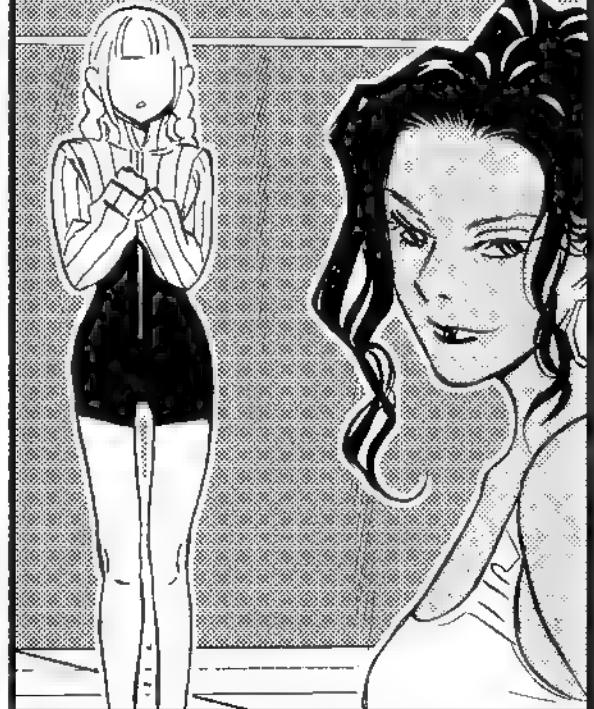
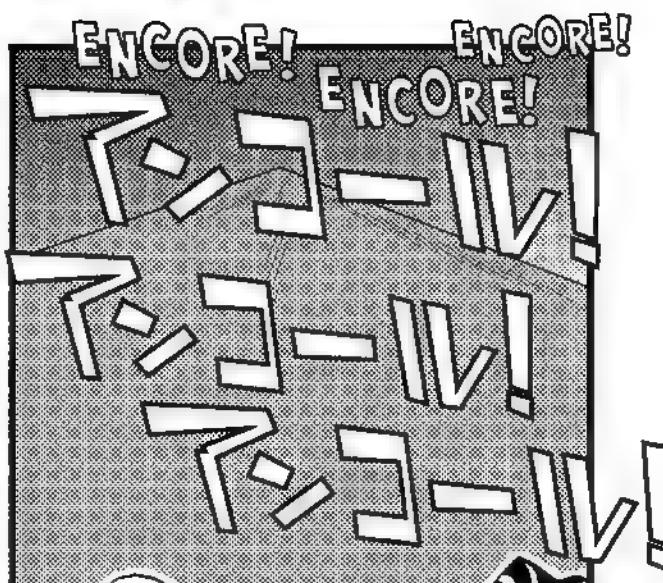
I'M JUST
SO GLAD I
BECAME A
SINGER!

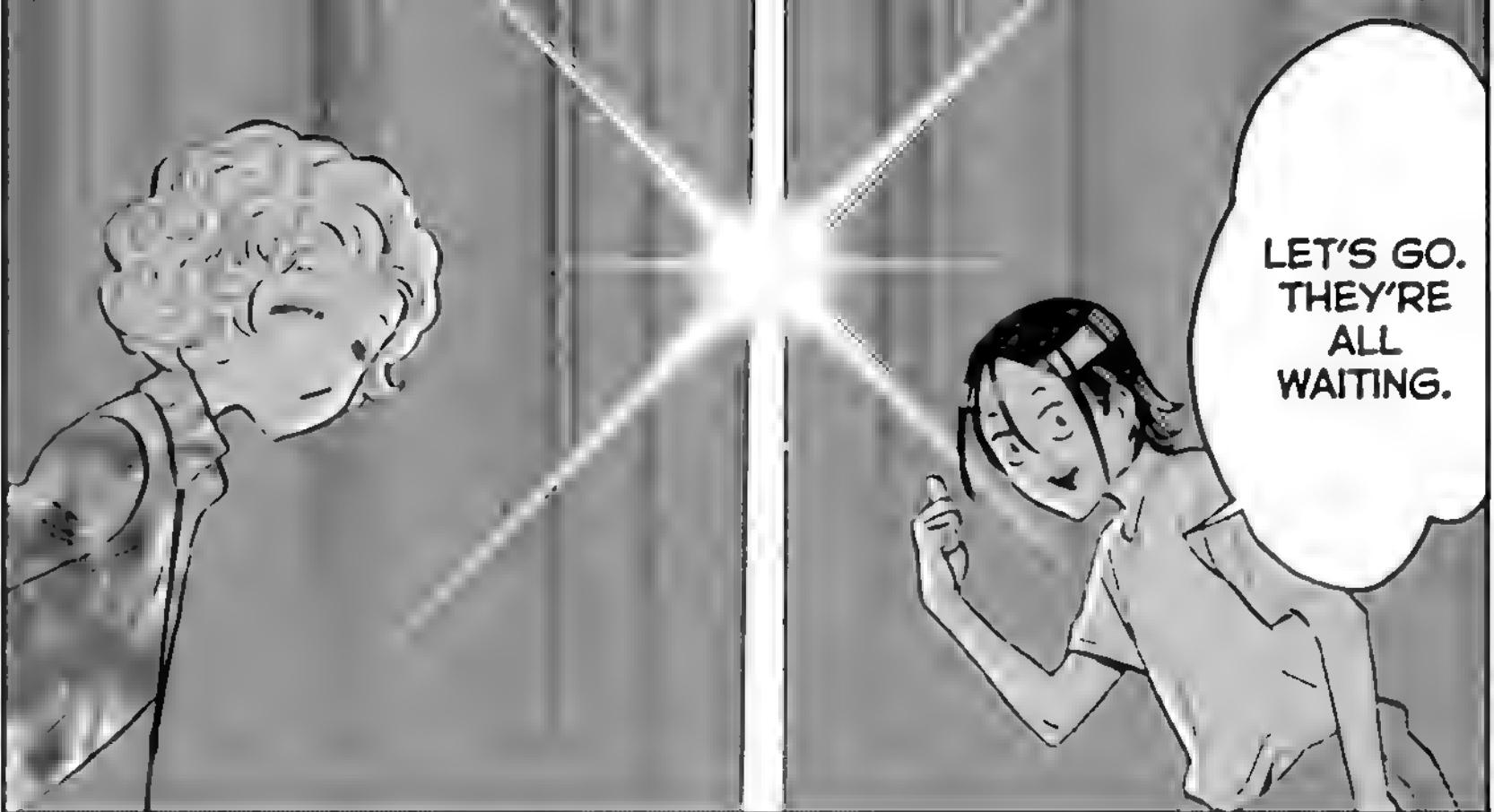
YOU'RE THE
REASON WHY
I EVEN SAW
MARIA SING
IN THE FIRST
PLACE!











LET'S GO.
THEY'RE
ALL
WAITING.



THIS STAR
WILL SHINE
FOREVER!

THIS
NIGHT
JUST
KEEPS
GETTING
BETTER.





SUMMER
SONIA
2020,
DAY 1...

...AT THE
3RD
STAGE...

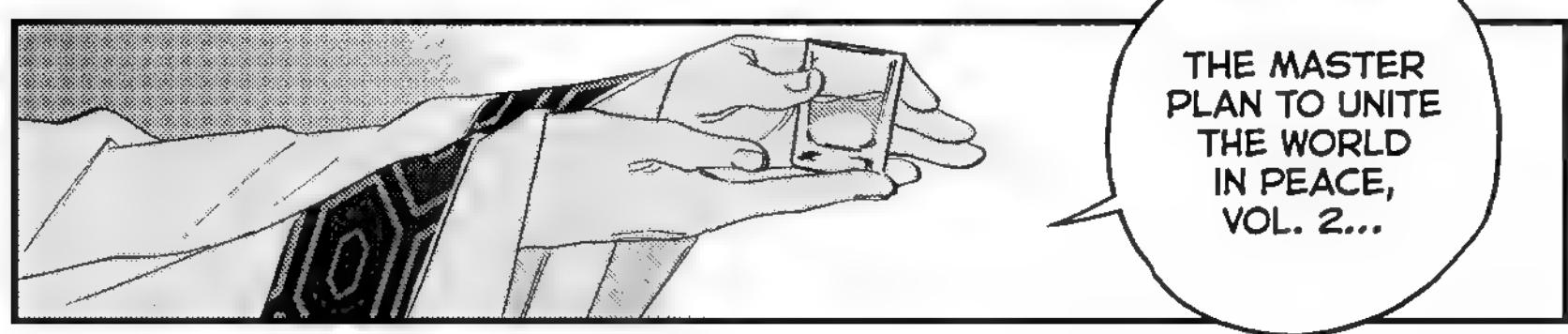
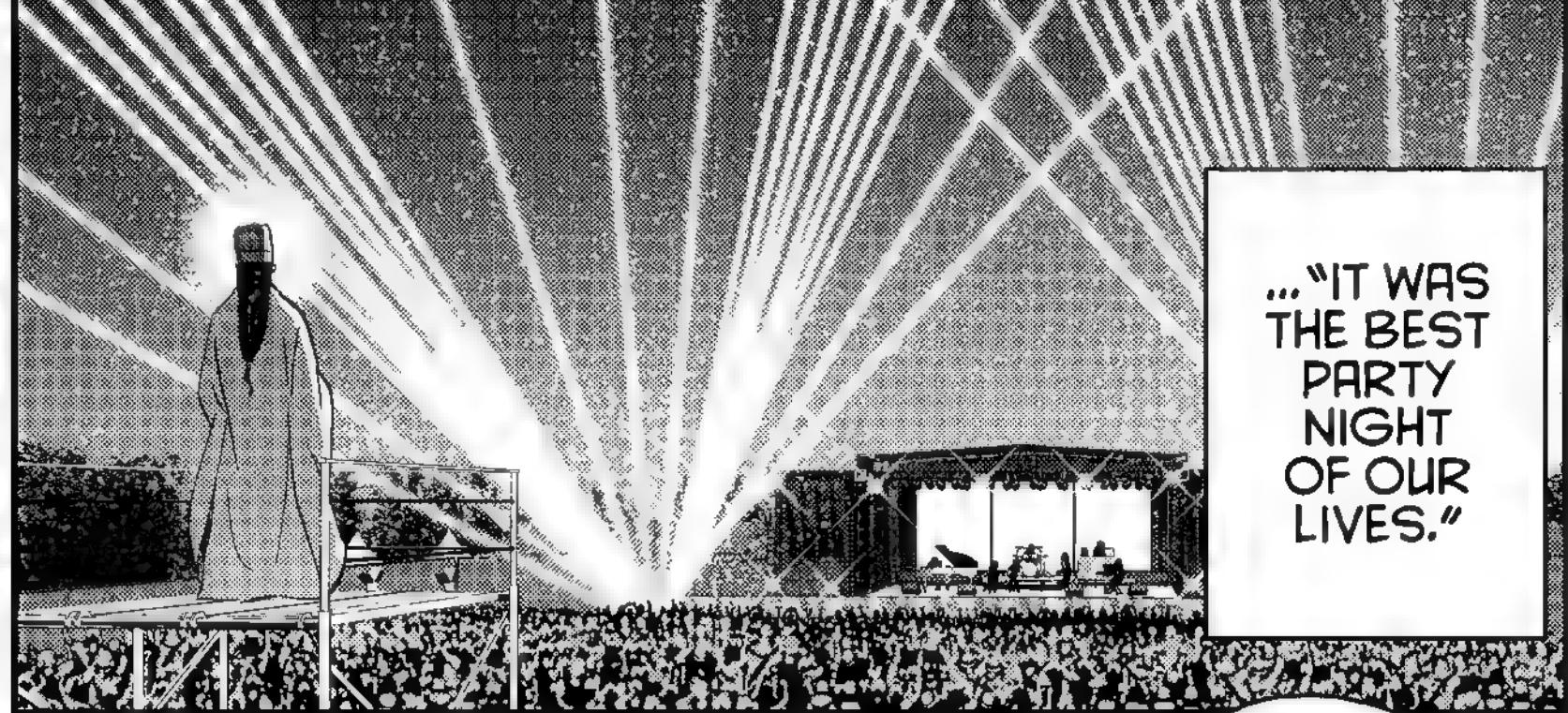




THIS WOULD BE DUBBED "THE MIRACLE OF SUMMER SONIA," CARVING THIS INCIDENT INTO THE FESTIVAL'S PRESTIGIOUS HISTORY.

...FROM STARTING WITH 311 MEMBERS IN THE AUDIENCE, THE CROWD GREW TO 43,000, BREAKING ALL PREVIOUS RECORDS.

THE AUDIENCE LATER HAD THIS TO SAY ABOUT THE RARE EXPERIENCE...





EXTRA

SPECIAL SHORT STORY

MORNING CONTEMPLATION

Yuto Yotsuba

► **IT IS CURRENTLY** seven o'clock in the morning. With his headdress on and fan in hand, Kongming wanders the town of Shibuya.

"The busy Shibuya streets are no match for the clear, quiet morning atmosphere. Splendid—splendid, indeed." Taking in the sharp morning air, Kongming continues his morning stroll in high spirits.

His feet take him to a small café in Udagawacho, a place he always frequents whenever he needs to organize his thoughts or come up with new ideas to overcome the obstacles before him.

When Kongming first arrived to this current era, he couldn't stand the bitter taste of coffee, but that deep flavor and aroma eventually grew on him. Before he knew it, enjoying the occasional cup of joe had become a habit.

"Good morning, Kongming-*laoshi*." The young man employed at the café greets Kongming with a smile as he walks in, just like usual. The man has dyed ashen gray hair and pierced ears, and despite his flashy appearance, he's actually another history buff. He's become extremely impressed with Kongming's choice of clothes and style of speech, and now he's always looking forward to seeing Kongming step in through those café doors.

Kongming truly enjoys the unique smell of freshly-brewed coffee and the positive attitude the employees here have towards their

customers. Just stepping into the café is enough to put a smile on his face. “Good morning, Sir Koda. The weather is looking marvelous today. It’s shaping up to be a wonderful day indeed.”

“*Laoshi*, I want to thank you for the advice you gave me the other day. That girl I talked about, remember her? We’re dating now.”

“Oh? I may not excel in the arts of romance and love, but it sounds like that strategy I suggested did the trick.”

Koda is in love with a lady who works in the same café. When he discussed this with Kongming, the wise tactician gave him some broad advice that apparently paved the way for the lovers.

“Thank you so much for your help. Please, have a cup of coffee. It’ll be my treat. What roast would you like today?” Koda smiles widely, showing his white teeth.

“Are you certain?”

“I couldn’t be *more* certain, *laoshi*.”

“In that case, I shall gratefully accept your kindness,” Kongming says, bowing at the younger man.

An Asian man, dressed from head-to-toe in ancient Chinese garb as if he had stepped straight out of the Three Kingdoms period, orders a cup of coffee in this quaint café, built in an American style with wood-paneled walls. It almost seems unreal to the surrounding customers, like they’re watching a scene ripped straight out of a movie.

“We’ve got a batch of fresh beans come in from Santa Cruz—you know, the island in the Galapagos. It’s not a blend, but you’d think it was from the flavor balance. It’s got a bit of tartness to it, actually.”

“Hm...very well. I shall have a cup of your recommendation, then.”

“Thank you. It’s going to take a bit, so please have a seat.”

“Understood.” Kongming gives Koda a light bow before turning to look at the café. He strides over to an empty seat next to a plant that towers around six and a half feet.

After a bit of waiting, Koda comes out with coffee in hand, and he places the cup on the table. After thanking Kongming again for his help, he retreats back to the counter, behind the register.

Kongming looks at the table before him where a single coffee cup rests. The white steam wafts up from the dark coffee, freshly brewed with beans imported from Santa Cruz. Clearing his mind, Kongming breathes in the scent. He gazed at the scenery shown out of the antique windows decorated with a navy-colored frame.

Udagawacho is nearly empty at seven in the morning. Every now and then, Kongming can see a man in a suit walk by. Slowly, the sun begins to rise, and the noise picks up as people start to come and go through the streets.

Kongming picks up the dainty coffee cup and brings it to his lips.

“My, my... This does have a refined, fruity taste. The rich flavor stands out, and even the aftertaste is marvelous.” Kongming nods to himself, satisfied, as his free hand trails down his beard.

With a nice cup of coffee in his system so early in the morning, Kongming is confident that wonderful ideas will come to him today.

As Kongming enjoys every sip of his rich coffee, his thoughts begin to wander. Ideas, situations, people, their relationships, and worldly matters float to the surface and disappear like foam on the sea.

As one thought reappears, it links to another, forming connections and changing as his mind continues to drift.

New customers walk in through the café doors and place their orders, and the seats begin to fill.

Eventually, Kongming's coffee cup is finally empty. Before he knew it, Kongming had sat in that seat for a little less than an hour.

"...I can use this." Kongming whispers with an organized idea in mind. He'd been right that thinking is best done in the early mornings.

Holding onto that thought, Kongming returns to the present, glancing around the small café. Sitting next to him is now a man in a suit, his laptop out and open on the table before him, and a complex expression on his face as he speaks into the cell phone held up to his ear.

From his looks, the man appears to be in his early thirties, with an undercut. His navy suit looks custom-made, fitting his body perfectly. He has high cheekbones and a face that gives off the impression of stubbornness.

From what Kongming can hear, there seem to be some setbacks in his startup business.

"...Can I help you?"

The man has now finished his call and notices Kongming's stare. He turns to Kongming, his eyes suspicious. He must've realized that Kongming had overheard him. The man's eyes then trail up and down Kongming's clothes, his features shifting to surprise as he's taken aback by the Chinese man's wardrobe.

“Are you some Three Kingdoms cosplayer...?”

“My apologies. I didn’t mean to eavesdrop on your conversation.”

“Huh...right.”

“Pay me no mind, good sir. I won’t be repeating what I heard here today.”

“Yeah. You better not.” The man seems angry, and his words come out sharp and prickly. But Kongming smiles back at him, unaffected by his sharp tongue.

“Kongming-*laoshi*. Would you like another cup?” Koda walks over to them, a smile across his lips.

“What a grand idea, my boy. I shall pay with the app.”

“Understood, sir.”

“Oh, and please, bring me two cups this time.”

“Two?”

“Yes.”

“It sounds like you really enjoyed this coffee. I’m glad!”

Kongming reaches into his sleeve and pulls out his phone. He unlocks it and taps on a payment app before passing it to Koda, who rushes back to the register.

The man in the navy suit watches the two from the corner of his eye and decides that the cosplayer isn’t really anyone he needs to be suspicious of. Soon after, he returns his gaze to the laptop before him.

About five minutes later, two cups of coffee are brought to Kongming’s table.

“Thank you for waiting. Here’s your receipt.” He says, returning Kongming’s phone to him.

“My apologies for your trouble.”

“I’ve loaded up your app with points, too.”

“You have my thanks.”

Kongming has been saving up points in that payment app. He knows just how important it is to be frugal, both with money and points, in this world.

When Koda retreats back to the counter, Kongming takes another sip of coffee.

“*Hm.* Galapagos, Santa Cruz...what perfect beans for the early morning.” Kongming says with exaggerated enthusiasm before he returns the cup to the table, picks up the other cup of coffee he ordered, and brings it to the table next to his. The man in the suit stares at the cup before giving Kongming another suspicious look.

“What’s this for?”

“Enjoy this, if you’d like. It seems you’re in quite the trouble.”

“...No thanks. I don’t want it.”

“There’s no need to be so cautious, good sir. You’re here in a café early in the morning. It’s much healthier to tackle work with a relaxed mind and heart. I assure you this has quite the rich, fruity flavor.”

Kongming continues his praise for the coffee, ignoring every hint of refusal the man tries to give him. Kongming’s smile and rather loud voice eventually wins the man over. He reaches for the coffee and takes a sip.

“...It *is* good.”

“Right? Isn’t it?” Kongming fans himself in high spirits, nodding proudly before opening his mouth to speak again.

“My apologies for the late introduction. My name is Zhuge Liang—courtesy name Kongming.”

“Oh...I see. It’s nice to meet you.”

“And may I ask your name, good sir?”

“I’m...Uehara.” The man wasn’t sure whether he should feel embarrassed or amused seeing someone proudly call themselves Kongming. He tightens his lips in an attempt to hide the smile creeping up to his features. Kongming, though, is quite used to such a reaction and pays it no mind.

“The early morning is a prime time for contemplation. That’s when your mind is most clear.”

“Right. Yeah, I think so, too.” Uehara takes another sip of the coffee.

“As they say, your spirit is keenest in the morning. By noonday, it has begun to flag, and in the evening, it is bent only upon your return to camp.”

“That’s from Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*.”

“You’re well-read, I see.”

Uehara wants to end this conversation with this strange man and return to his work, but Kongming’s speech is so eloquent that Uehara can’t seem to stop listening. Meanwhile, Kongming takes another sip of coffee in that relaxed manner of his.

Uehara almost rolled his eyes at the sight of Kongming drinking his coffee like some high-class noble, but it also seems fitting for a café like this so early in the morning. Leaving aside those thoughts, Uehara picks up his cup and takes a slow sip himself. The aroma wafts up through his nose and into his lungs, forcing him to let out a sigh.

“Do you know the name Liu Bang, the Emperor Gaozu of Han?”

Kongming breaks the silence with a sudden question.

“Liu Bang? I’ve heard the name.”

“Liu Bang was not blessed with military prowess, renowned reputation, family status, nor political standing. His rival, Xiang Yu, however, was from an incredibly powerful family. He had everything he needed to win over the kingdom.”

“Oh...Xiang Yu and Liu Bang. I’ve read about them in a manga.”

“Then do you know why Liu Bang won instead, despite Xiang Yu having an overwhelmingly mightier military?”

“If I remember correctly...Liu Bang was more charismatic, right?”

“Charismatic...he may have been, yes. But where did that charisma stem from?”

“That’s a talent he was born with...I mean, just think about it. There’s a bunch of people who’re allowed to do whatever they want and no one bats an eye.”

“*Heh heh heh...*I’m not so sure about that.”

“Am I wrong, then?” In no time at all, Uehara had turned his whole body to face Kongming during their conversation.

“Xiang Yu an elderly tactician by the name of Fan Zeng. Fan Zeng told Xiang Yu that he *must* kill Liu Bang to succeed, as Fan Zeng feared that Liu Bang will be a cause of great concern in the future.”

“That’s pretty violent.”

“However, Xiang Yu refused to take that advice. He was confident in his army and their overwhelming might.” Kongming pauses for a beat. “Time passed, and Xiang Yu departed for Xianyang. His army

advanced smoothly, defeating all of his foes as they marched. Every match, Xiang Yu came out the victor. However, his victories were actually the result of his tactician, Fan Zeng. Unfortunately, Xiang Yu did not understand that, so when Xiang Yu found himself caught in a web of deceit, he dismissed Fan Zeng from his service”

“Huh...”

“Meanwhile, Liu Bang had a brilliant tactician by the name of Zhang Liang, and he listened to every piece of advice Zhang Liang offered. He awarded his soldiers handsomely for their feats, which built up an army of loyal fighters. He focused more on the glory of his men rather than his own. In time, his army grew stronger and stronger.”

“I see where this is going.”

“Liu Bang understood his own abilities. He gathered allies, relied on them, and rewarded them accordingly. Some say that he was very well-loved by others. Now, knowing this, would you still believe that his feats were a result of his innate ‘charisma?’”

“...Then it was something he learned, rather than something he was born with?”

“Not at all. His charisma was born based on his actions in the end. But once one reflects upon oneself, one may find a breakthrough when faced with an obstacle. For example, perhaps even just listening to what your subordinate has to say may prove rewarding...”

Kongming slowly fans himself, a smile across his lips.

Uehara’s mouth hangs open in surprise when he finally realizes that everything Kongming said has been a form of advice meant

for him. He thinks back to his phone call when he'd dismissed everything his subordinate said, and he can feel his face light up with embarrassment.

He knows that his subordinate is talented, but he refused to trust him. Uehara suddenly realizes how foolish he's been, just like Xiang Yu did.

"This may come off as arrogant, but...I'm not one to speak myself."

Kongming gives Uehara one last smile before slowly standing. "I pray that you have a wonderful rest of your day, good sir." With one final bow, Kongming strides out of the café.

It's already 8:30. The streets of Shibuya are already alive and bustling.

"The morning has not changed at all. It still remains the same, from my era to now."

Kongming watches as people come and go, rushing about in the Shibuya scramble, as the day begins for the people there.

-END-

Ya Boy Kongming! 13

Kodansha Digital Edition

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English digital edition published by Kodansha USA Publishing, LLC, New
York.

ISBN: 9798889331506

Digital Edition: 1.0.0

Translation: Jacqueline Fung

Lettering: Darren Smith

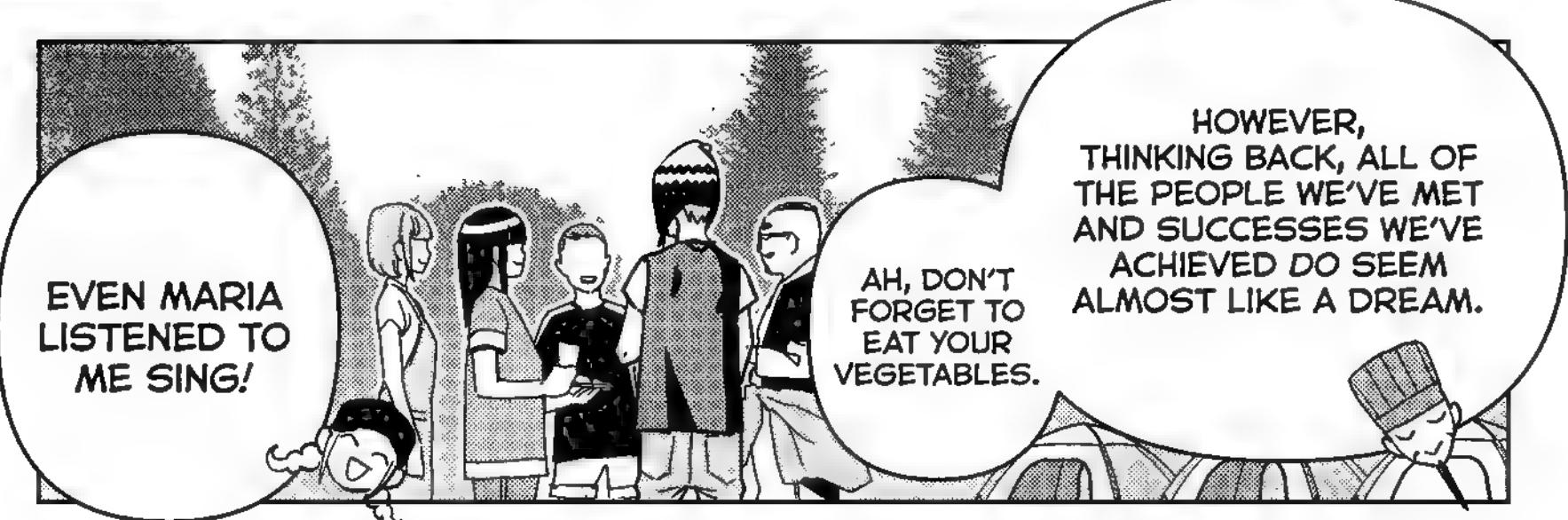
Editing: Sarah Tilson

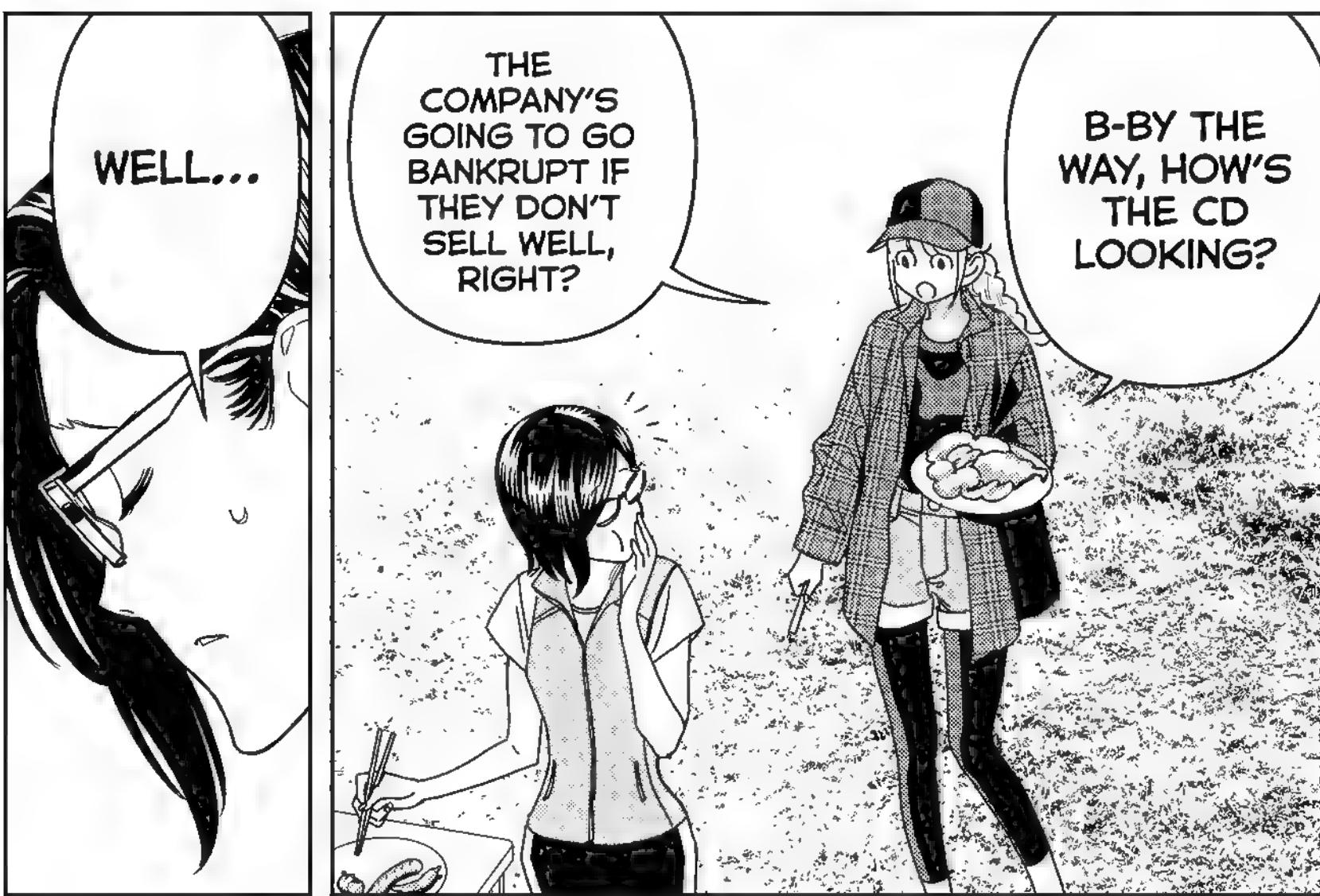
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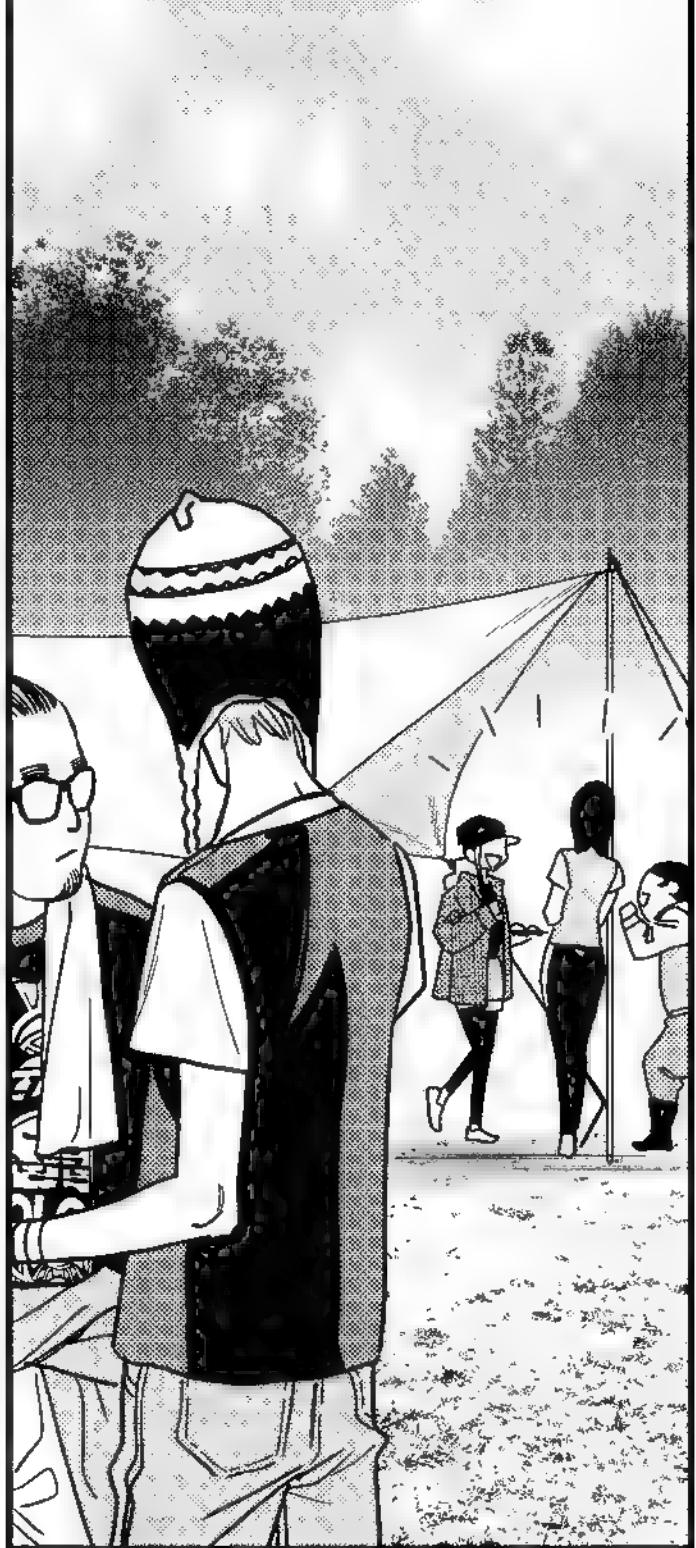
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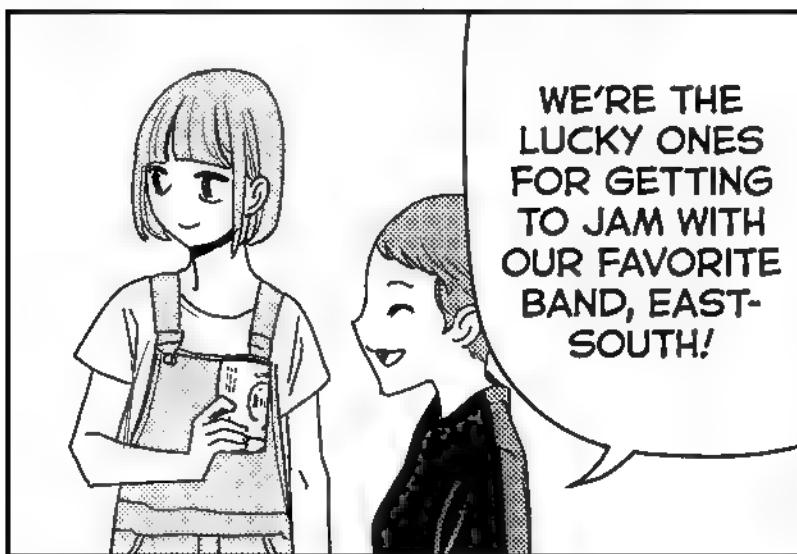
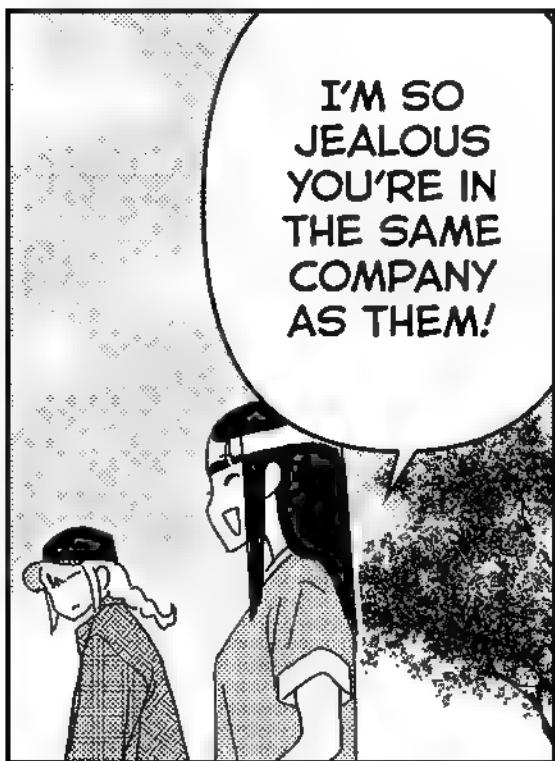
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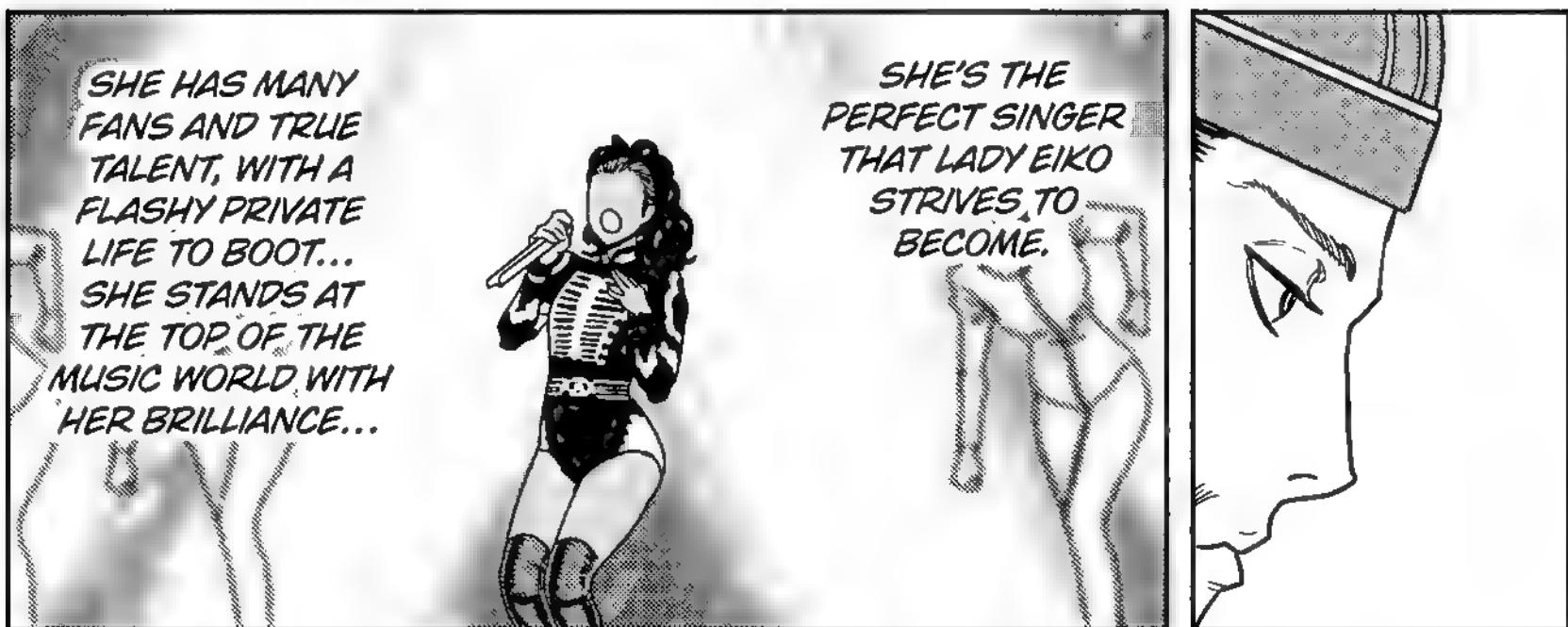
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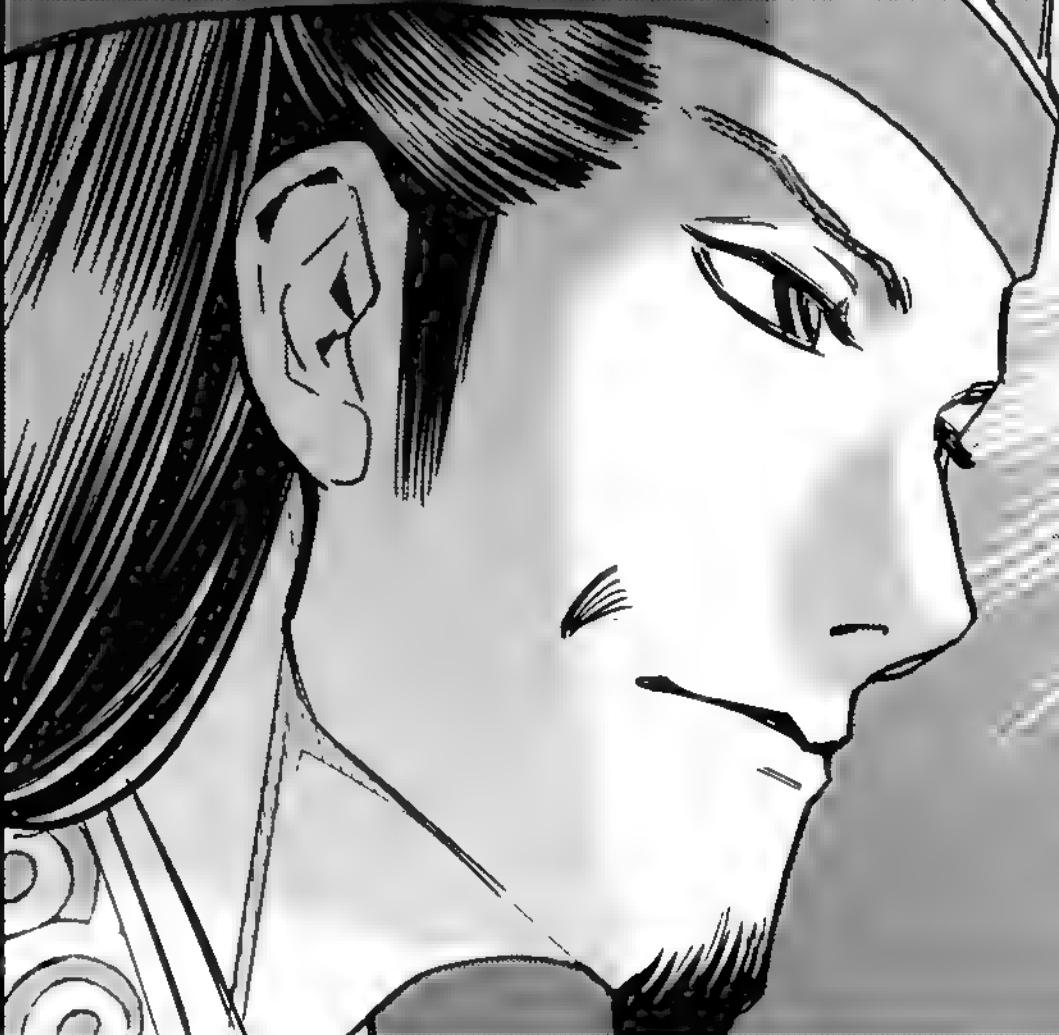




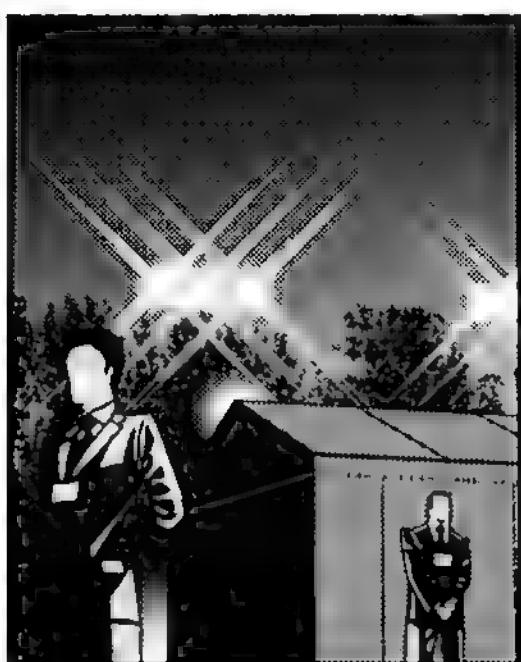
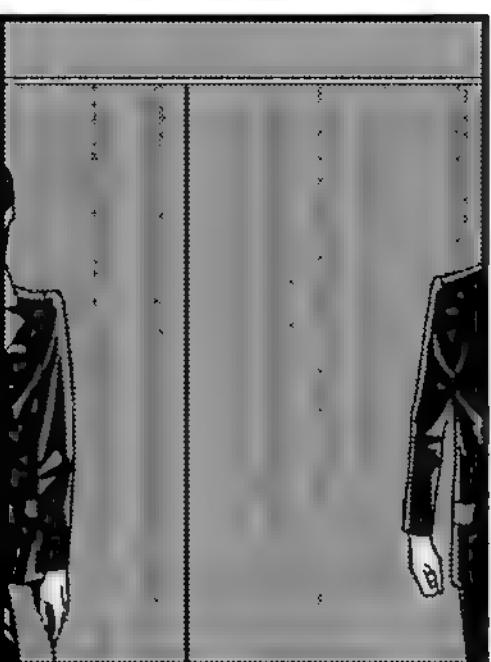
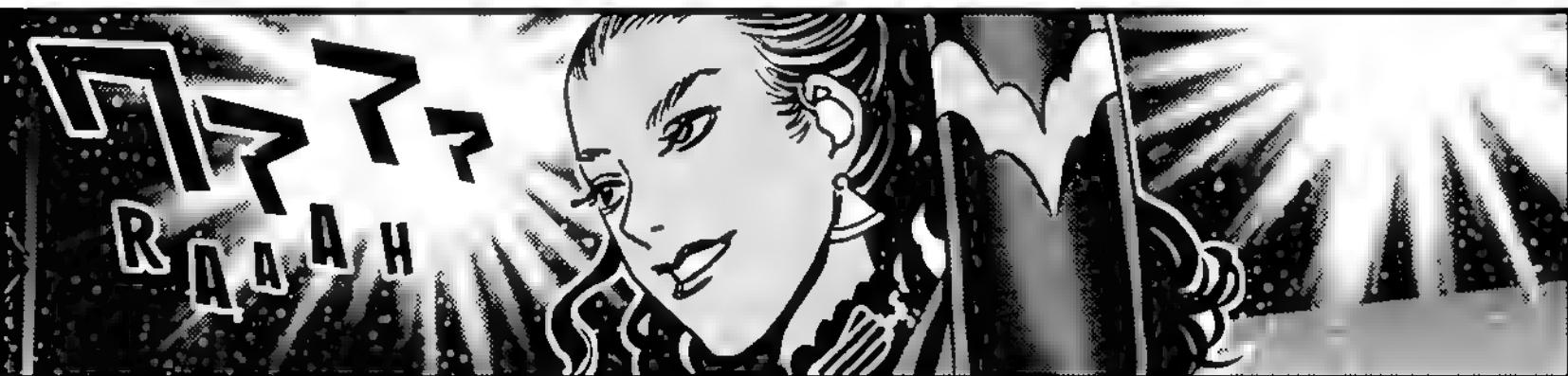


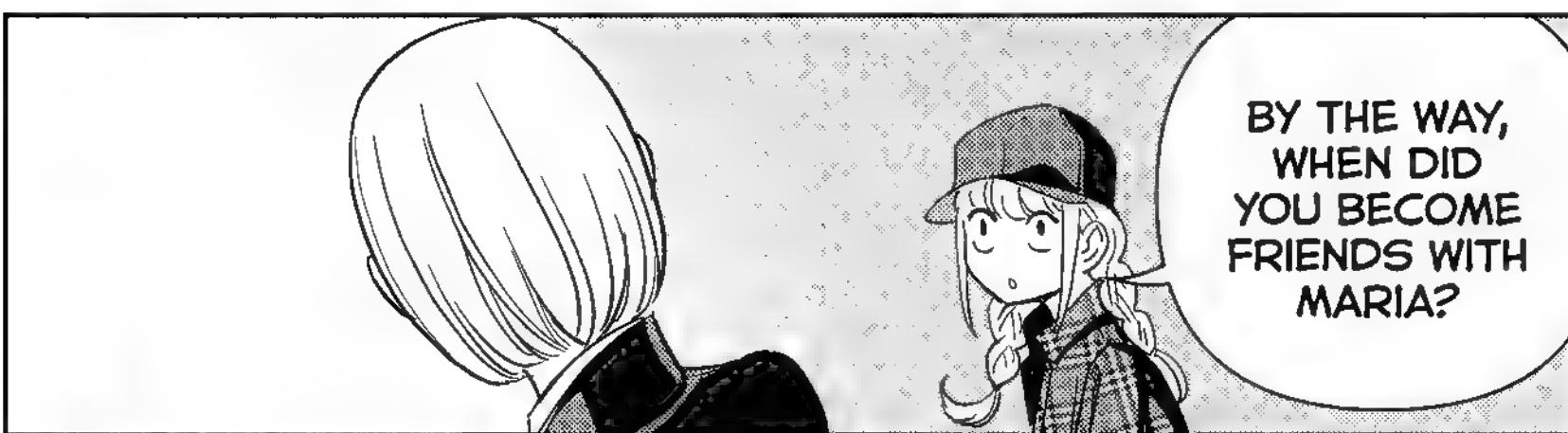


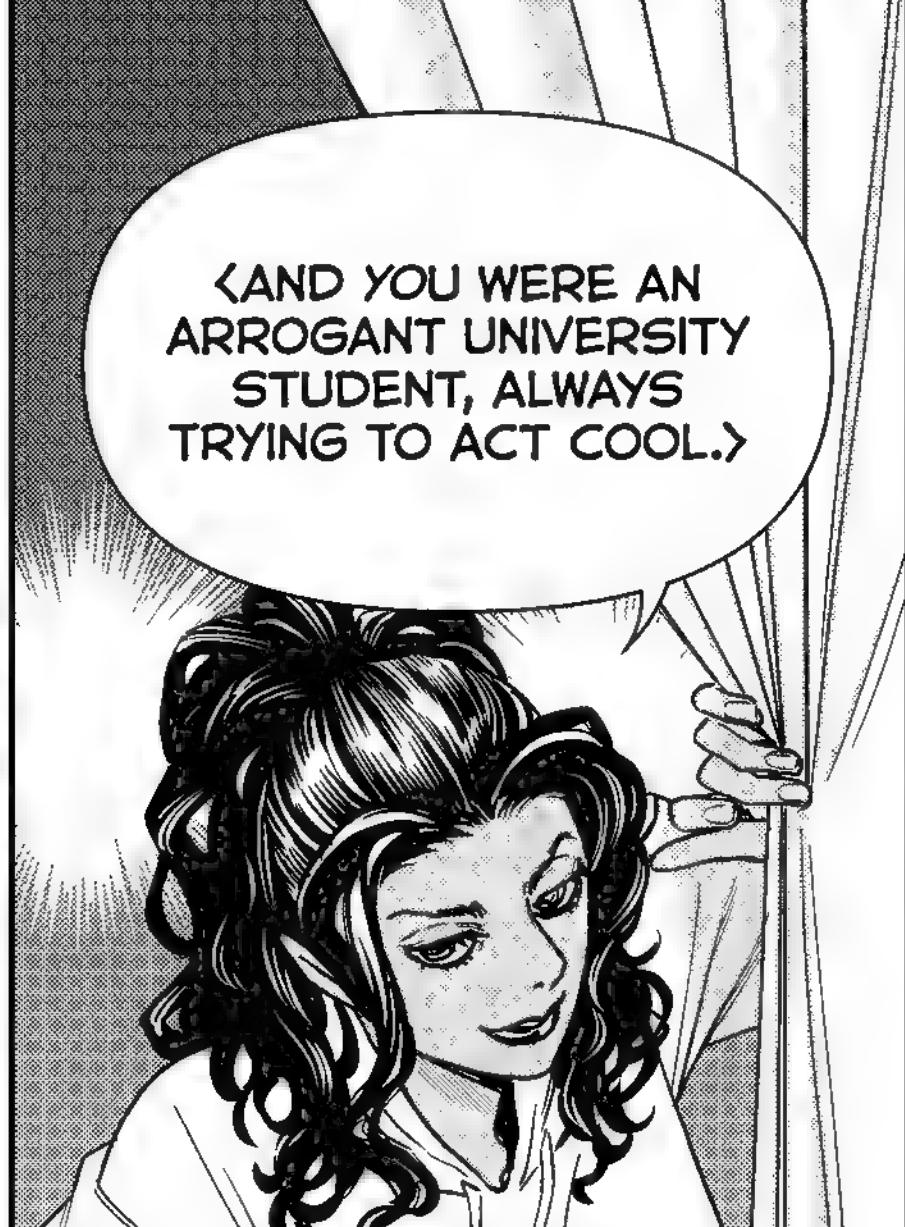
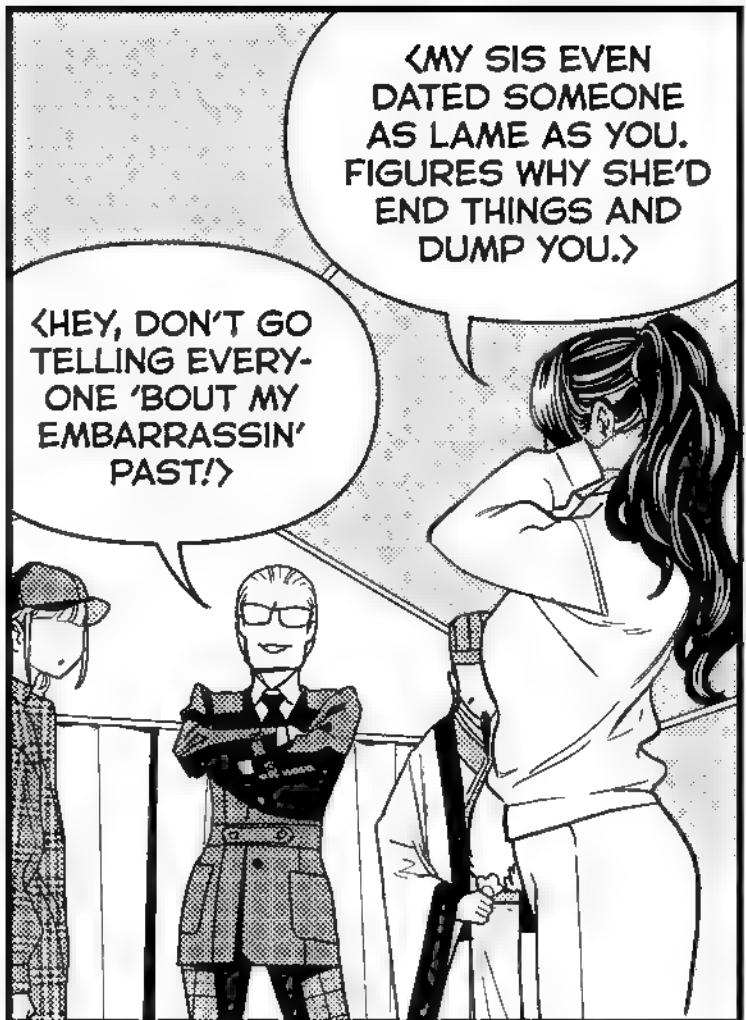




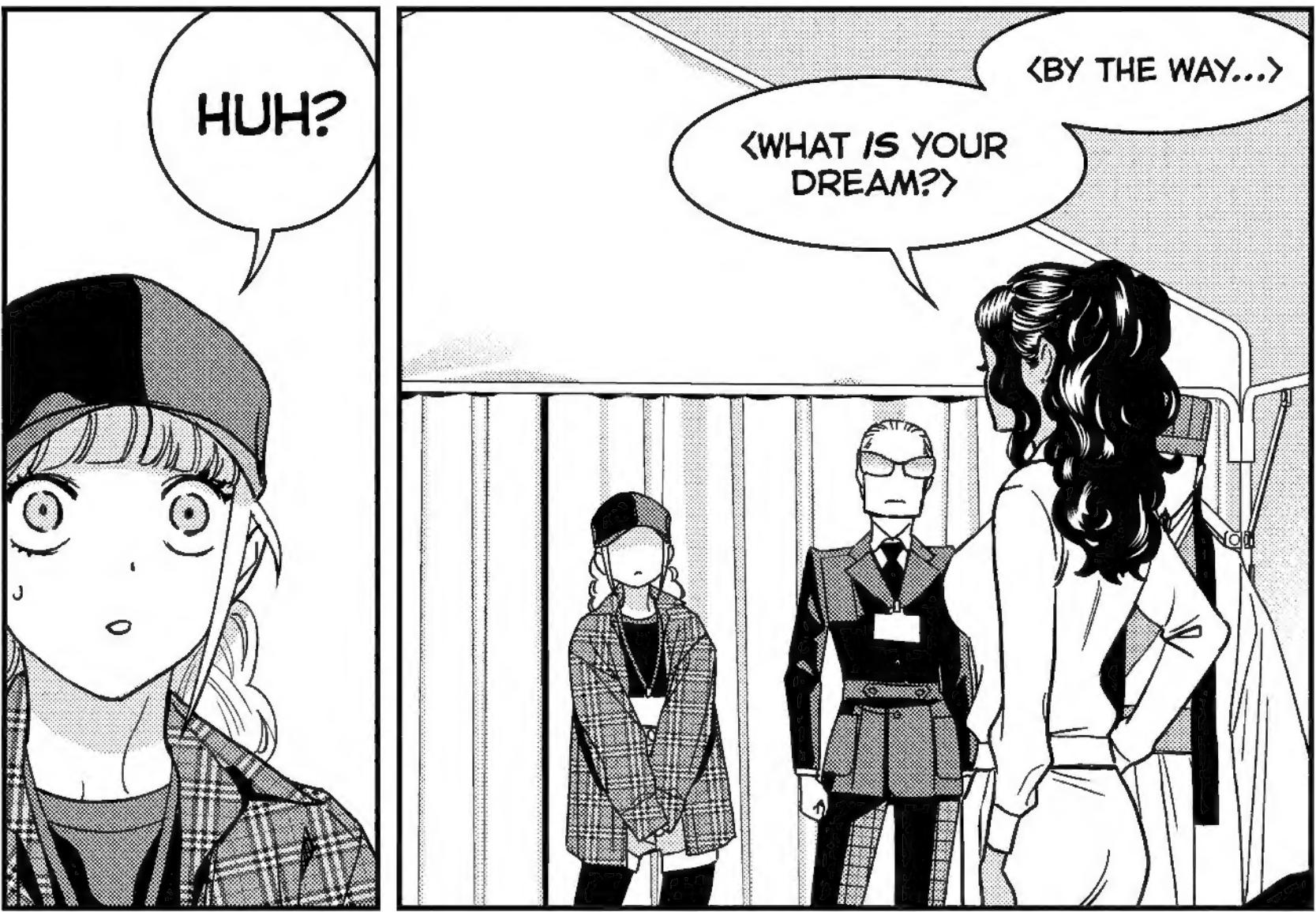
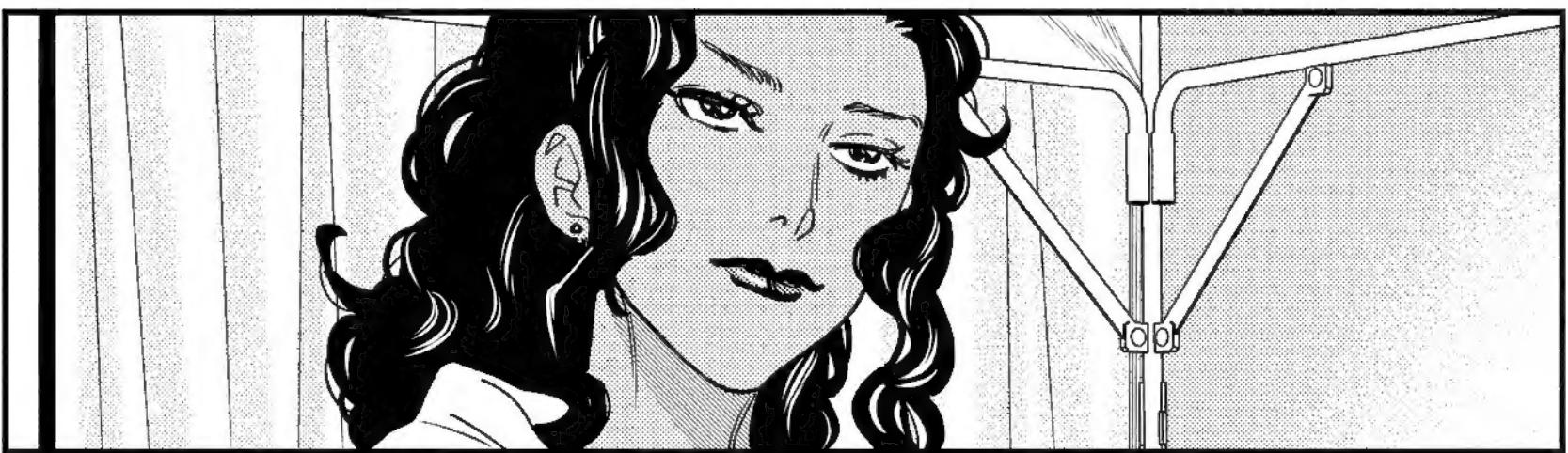
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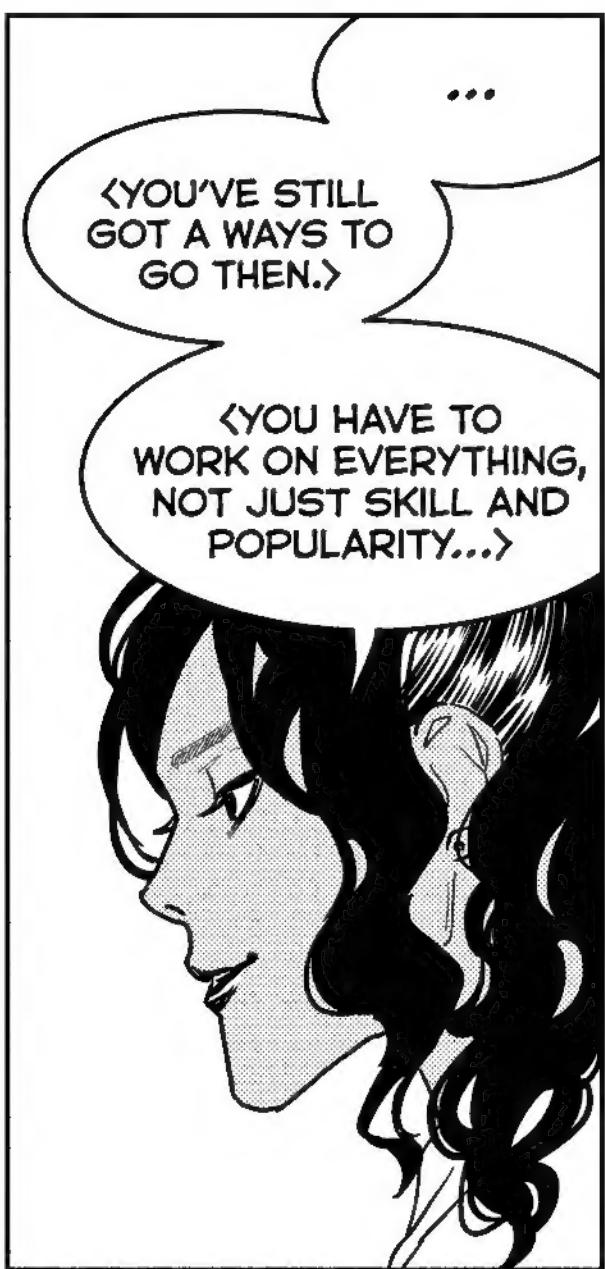
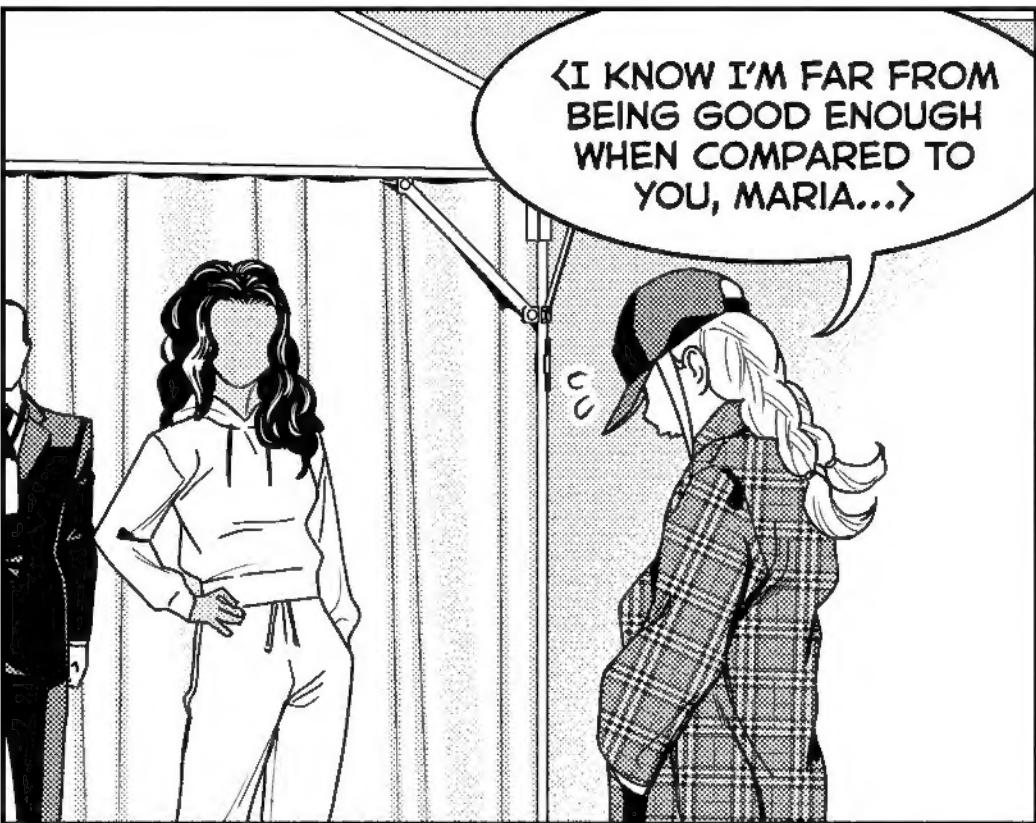














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